Doctor Who

THE EVIL OF THE DALEKS

BASED ON A DOCTOR WHO ADVENTURE FIRST BROADCAST IN 1967

JOHN PEEL

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THE DALEKS TELL ME I'M GOING TO DO

SOMETHING FOR THEM – SOMETHING I WOULD

RATHER DIE THAN DO.

Stranded in Victorian London, separated from his TARDIS and forced to cooperate with the Daleks, it seems that the Doctor's luck has finally run out.

The Daleks are searching for the elusive Human Factor, and want the Doctor to help them find it. With Victoria and Jamie held captive, the Doctor has no choice.

An army of Daleks stands poised to conquer the universe.

Will the Human Factor be the ultimate weapon?

This is a brand-new novelization of a classic Dalek story, and is the first story to feature Victoria as a companion.

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JOHN PEEL

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For Deanne Holding

A favourite story for one of our favourite people and with thanks to Jonathan V. Way

Special thanks to Terry Nation and Roger Hancock **CONTENTS**

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Prologue

It was almost beyond belief.

The Emperor considered rechecking the projections, then dismissed the thought. There was no point to it. It had suspected what the answer would be for quite some time now. Almost three hundred years, in fact. Had anyone else even hinted at its conclusions, the Emperor would have had them exterminated in seconds. It was treason and worse to even think what those projections had proven without a shadow of a doubt.

The Daleks were losing their Great War. Worse, they were being driven back on all fronts. The Thal offensive in the Seventh Sector: two hundred saucers lost. The Draconian frontier: half of the fleet annihilated. The Terran Federation: six worlds taken back from their Dalek defenders. The computers predicted that within eighty years, the Daleks would lose; utterly, finally and irrevocably.

The defeat had been slow, but it was nonetheless certain for all of that. The loss of the Taranium core and the destruction of the fleet poised on Kembel had taken place more than a thousand years ago. The Emperor recalled it with the stark clarity its computer-enhanced mind felt in all matters. The plan had been to strike suddenly at the heart of human space, cutting that heart out and annihilating it utterly. Had it not been for the interference of that meddling wanderer the Doctor, the Daleks would have succeeded.

The Doctor!

Over the entire time that the Daleks had existed, the mysterious Doctor had time and again arrived to defeat their plans. His appearance had changed many times, but never his unflagging devotion to the destruction of the Daleks' schemes. From the instant of their creation, the Doctor had been their greatest foe. He had almost destroyed them at the moment of their birth. Now, if these projections were correct, the Doctor had won a final victory.

Over the centuries, the Emperor Dalek had enhanced its own capabilities. It had begun its own existence as merely the first of the Daleks that the mad Kaled scientist Davros had created. It had been its weapon that had cut down their creator. It had been the Dalek Prime, the first among many. But that had never been sufficient.

Driven by his own restless nature, the Dalek Prime had experimented on other creatures, striving to improve on what nature and the effects of the long-ended Kaled-Thal War had done to the other life-forms of Skarao. The surviving examples of its experiments now dwelled within the petrified forest or the Lake of Mutations at the foot of the Drammankin Mountains. Its researches had led to many dead-ends, some of them literally dead, but he had finally succeeded in isolating complex molecules that could cause mutation within a Dalek.

There had been no question about who to use the drugs on: the Dalek Prime could never risk another Dalek evolving beyond its own capabilities. It had used the drugs itself.

Now, it had reached the peak of Dalek evolution. Its mental powers were a hundred times greater than any other member of the race. There had been a price to pay for its growth, but it had no regrets about paying it. Within its vast mind, thousands of schemes were juggled, considered and approved or rejected. Aided by the computer implants inside his life-support systems, the self-appointed Emperor Dalek guided the progress of the entire race.

What it needed now was a bold new plan that would pull victory from the jaws of defeat. Some audacious move that their foes could not anticipate or fight. The Emperor started to correlate all of the projects now underway. A combination of several of them might result in some new thrust.

And what if the Doctor interfered again?

The seeds of a plan began to come together in the devious mind of the Emperor.

Find the Doctor! it ordered all Daleks, *Locate him – but do not destroy him! Yet.*

1

To Set A Trap

The roar of another jet taking off faded away overhead.

The Doctor had taken about as much of the noise as he could stand for one day. With the menace of the Chameleons over, he felt the urge to be on his way again.

His hands clasped across his chest, he watched Ben and Polly walk away across the tarmac towards the arrivals building. The two young people had been travelling with him on his aimless wanderings through time and space for quite some time but now that they were back on their familiar Earth, they had elected to stay behind and resume their normal lives.

The Doctor couldn't blame them. Sooner or later everyone who journeyed with him felt the need to set down roots again, to be part of some society instead of ranging through the far reaches of the cosmos. His own wanderlust was unabated, but he knew that other people were not so blessed – or cursed – as he. And, through some vagary of fate, or perhaps of the TARDIS itself, the Doctor had managed to bring Ben and Polly back to July 20th, 1966; the very day and hour that they had started on their adventures with him.

It was curious to think that just over twenty miles to the north of Gatwick airport at this very moment, Ben and Polly were rushing into the TARDIS to begin the adventures that they were now walking away from. With a pang, the Doctor realized that he was there, too: his older self (or younger self, chronologically speaking), with flowing white hair and grouchy manners that he had thankfully lost in his regeneration. He much preferred this younger look, with the Beatle-like mop of dark hair, the impish face with the puckish little grin, the untidy but very practical clothing, and much better manners, too.

Still, it would be tempting to take a quick trip to see his former self, even though crossing one's own time-line was strictly forbidden. There were so many things he could tell himself, so that when he met the—

That was why meeting oneself was contrary to all of the laws of time. He knew that everything would turn out fine.

It already had. Best to forget the temptations and just clamber into the TARDIS and be off to – who could say?

His old time and space craft had a whimsical notion of travel. It didn't much matter what he did with the controls, it went where it wanted to go and that was that. Since the Doctor had no particular agenda or purpose in mind in his travels, he was content to leave the ship to wend its path with a fairly light controlling touch of his hands.

‘Come along, Jamie,’ he said to his last remaining companion. ‘I think it’s time that we were off, too.’

‘Aye,’ agreed Jamie, ‘I’ve had my fill of this place.’ His thick Scottish brogue had softened somewhat since he’d first met the Doctor in the aftermath of the battle of Culloden Field. This proud piper of the Clan McCrimmon had been one of the few survivors of that horrendous massacre, when the British redcoats had defeated the ragtag army of Bonnie Prince Charlie on April 16th, 1746.

He’d also seen wonders that no one in his day would have dreamed possible; aeroplanes, for example. He’d quickly grown used to those in the course of the Chameleon invasion of Earth. Now those odd, faceless beings had left the Earth again, seeking a different path for themselves, and Jamie was just as eager to be off.

The thing now was to find the TARDIS. When they had landed, the battered blue Police telephone box had materialized on one of the runways. It had promptly been moved to prevent an accident. Jean Rook, secretary to the airport’s commander, had given the Doctor very clear directions as to where the TARDIS had been taken.

Running through the instructions again in his mind, the Doctor led Jamie through the maze of support buildings and hangars.

‘Is it much further?’ Jamie grumbled.

‘Nearly there,’ the Doctor promised. He pointed at one of the hangars. ‘Unless I’m very much mistaken, we should find the TARDIS inside that building there.’

It was almost impossible to miss the suspicion in Jamie’s eye, but the Doctor seemingly managed it. The young Scot knew that the Doctor’s memory was shaky at best. ‘Aye?’ he asked, skeptically. ‘Well, let’s have a look, shall we?’

Over the other noises of the airport, there came the sound of an engine starting. Through the open doors of the hangar, an open-backed lorry backed out. With a grinding clash of gears, it started off towards the airport exit.

‘Doctor!’ yelled Jamie in alarm. He pointed at the lorry.

Tied securely into place on the back of the vehicle was the TARDIS.

‘Oh my,’ muttered the Doctor. Jamie didn’t wait. He set off after the

lorry as fast as he could, his kilt flying up around his thighs. The Doctor, legs and arms windmilling as he ran, strove to keep up.

The lorry turned the corner and disappeared into the gap between two hangars, picking up speed as it went.

Jamie was yelling for the driver to stop, but it was unlikely he would be heard over the roaring engine – assuming the driver would want to stop if he knew he was being chased.

The Doctor wasn't sure they could catch the vehicle, given the start it had, but if it had to stop anywhere they might stand a chance.

Skidding into the turn, Jamie was brought up short by a wire-meshed gate. It had been locked already. The lorry was trundling away. It made another turn and disappeared from view, heading towards the London road exit of the airport. Jamie threw himself at the fence, prepared to climb it to continue the chase. The Doctor, his chest heaving and his breathing heavy, grabbed his companion by the ankles before he could clamber over.

'It's no use, Jamie,' he gasped. 'They're too far ahead.'

From his place on the fence, the young Scot stared down bleakly at the Doctor. 'We canna just let them go,' he complained. 'They've stolen the TARDIS!'

'I'm well aware of that,' the Doctor answered. 'But there's more than one way to skin a cat. Let's try and do this the less strenuous way, shall we?'

Jamie stared through the fence. The lorry was long gone, and the sound of its engine had faded into the background racket of the airport. He sighed and climbed down. 'Aye, I suppose we'd better.' He frowned at the Doctor. 'But how many ways are there to skin a cat? And why would you want to? There's not enough meat on one to cook.'

The Doctor shook his head. 'It's just an expression, Jamie. It means that there are other avenues to explore beyond the obvious one of haring after that lorry. We'll do this the intellectual way, shall we?'

I was afraid you'd say that.' Jamie had an abiding distrust of any course other than the direct approach.

Leading the way back to the hangar, the Doctor poked his head

around the open door. It was a maintenance hangar for the airport cars. At the back were a couple of lorries undergoing repairs. Various engine parts were scattered across the several work benches in the room.

Supplies filled metal shelving and beside the door were several bins, ready for the dust-men to collect. There was only one person in the place, a workman at one of the benches, with his back to the door. He was dressed in a dirty shirt and a pair of grease-splotched overalls. A handkerchief, even filthier than the overalls, half-hung out of one pocket. The workman held a large metal file, and was attacking the end of a piece of metal tubing clamped in the bench's vice. Metal filings flew as he worked, and there was a screeching of tortured metal. The rest of the bench was filled with parts and tools from a large box that lay on the floor. There was an old telephone perched precariously on the end of the bench, and on the wall beside it was a rack of clipboards. The inevitable calendar with pin-ups of girls in bikinis holding wrenches was pinned by the boards.

'Excuse me,' called the Doctor. The man either didn't hear him, or wasn't paying attention. 'Excuse me,' he called again, louder this time. There was still no response. The Doctor coughed, loudly and theatrically, with the same result.

Giving the Doctor a look of disgust, Jamie marched over and tapped the workman on one shoulder.

With a yell of shock, the man let the file clatter to the floor as he spun around. He was surprisingly clean beside the stains of his overalls, and his dark hair was neatly oiled and slicked back. In one ear, the Doctor could plainly see the man was wearing a hearing aid. The wire ran inside his overalls. The man reached inside and adjusted something.

'I wonder if you can help us,' the Doctor asked.

'Sorry I didn't hear you arrive,' the worker replied. 'But my mate plays his radio full blast.' He gestured at the next bench, where there was a large and battered transistor radio. 'I just turn off me hearing aid when he's here.'

'Yes, well he's not here now,' the Doctor answered. 'We are. 'I can see that,' the man answered. 'But I didn't know he'd left. I couldn't hear anything.'

'I don't suppose you would, no.'

Jamie had had enough of the Doctor's tactful approach.

'Who's taken the TARDIS?' he demanded angrily.

'The what?' The man's face was blank.

'Ah, he means the Police telephone box,' explained the Doctor, with a winning little smile.

' *Tardis* or something was what he said.'

The Doctor rolled his eyes, wishing he could kick Jamie. 'Ah, yes, well, you see, TARDIS ...' He had an inspiration. 'That's another word for Police box.'

The worker eyed Jamie, taking in the kilt and sour expression on the young man's face. 'Foreign, is he?'

'Me foreign?' yelled Jamie, outraged. 'You're the one that's foreign, *sassenach*! I'm Scottish!'

The Doctor gave a wide smile to the workman. 'That's right,' he said. 'TARDIS is a Gaelic word.'

'Oh.'

Jamie nudged the Doctor, none too gently. 'And it's getting further and further away all the time,' he complained.

'I know that,' the Doctor agreed. He turned back to the workman. 'Now look, Mister ... ?' He raised his eyebrows bessechingly.

'Hall,' the man replied, 'Bob Hall.' He bent and raised the volume on his hearing aid.

The Doctor caught a glimpse of the device, which was quite small. He hadn't thought that they'd been able to miniaturize them like this in the sixties. He'd been trapped in this era for some months in his old body, and was fairly certain he knew the level of technology. Then he shrugged mentally. He'd never made a study of hearing aids, after all. It was probably just a newer model. Working in the airport, this Bob Hall probably had his hands on a Japanese model or something. 'Now, Mr Hall,' he said gently. 'Perhaps you can help us.'

Several hundred yards from the hangar, there was a large open field. The grass close to the runways had been trimmed, but further away it was quite wild. Lying on his stomach in the grass was a hidden

spectator to the conversation in the repair shop. The man was dressed in dark clothing, and he was dark and shifty-looking.

Propped up on his elbows, he had a large, powerful pair of binoculars trained on the open doorway of the hangar.

Beside him in the grass was a small box that looked like the little brother of the radio installed in an aircraft. From a small speaker in it, the hidden observer could follow the conversation fairly clearly.

'We came to collect our property,' said the older man.

'What?' That was Bob Hall. 'The Police box? Your property?'

'Yes.'

'Oh.' Hall wasn't about to argue. 'Well, it's just gone.'

The watcher smiled to himself. Bob was really having a bit of fun with this pair. Acting as thick as two short planks!

Unaware that the 'hearing aid' was actually a radio transmitting every word they said to the watcher outside, the Doctor waited patiently for Hall to adjust it again.

Jamie wasn't in the mood to wait.

'We know it's just gone!' he yelled. Hall winced and turned down the volume again. 'That's the whole point.

It's ours, and somebody's stolen it.'

'Well,' Hall said slowly. 'I don't know about that.' He glanced down at the cluttered workbench. 'I've got a note here somewhere.' He started to rummage about the boxes and tools. Jamie sighed as Hall shifted things around without finding what he was searching for. Then he looked up at the wall. He appeared surprised to spot the clipboards there, and pulled down the closest one. The inch-thick wad of papers were white and stained with oil, but the top sheet was on light blue paper and looked fresh. 'Here we are!' he said triumphantly, as if he was King Arthur and had just pulled the sword from the stone. 'Knew it was about here somewhere.' He peered at the sheet. 'Right, here we are.

Police telephone box, collection, three o'clock.' He looked up at the electric clock on the wall, which now read twenty minutes past three.

‘They picked it up on the dot.’

‘May I see that?’ asked the Doctor gently, holding out his hand. Hall studied the extremity suspiciously for a moment before reluctantly placing the clipboard in it. The Doctor snatched the board away from him before Hall changed his mind. ‘Hmmm.’

‘It’s been signed for,’ Hall pointed out, as if that explained everything.

‘Yes, so I see,’ agreed the Doctor. ‘ *J Smith.* ’ He glanced up through his untidy fringe at the worker. ‘It doesn’t really help us, does it?’

‘I don’t know about that,’ said Hall defensively. ‘I just do what I’m told. There’s the order, and I was told the lorry would be here at three to pick it up.’ He shrugged.

‘Maybe you’d better see the airport commandant or somebody.’

The Doctor considered the idea. Commandant Gordon did owe them something for having saved both the airport and the Earth from the Chameleons. On the other hand, he was a bureaucrat, which meant he was capable of working in only two speeds: slow and reverse. The Doctor shook his head. ‘I don’t think we’d better do that.’ He half turned and took Jamie by the elbow. ‘Come along, Jamie. I think we’d better talk to the police.’

Hall’s face went pale. ‘Ah.’

His face a picture of innocence, the Doctor stared at the worker. ‘Yes?’

‘Of course, I know the name of the firm that collected the box.’ Hall looked eager to please.

‘You do?’ asked Jamie warily.

‘Yeah’ He scratched his head, as if that would help his memory. ‘Firm called Leatherman.’

‘Really?’ asked the Doctor enthusiastically. ‘Well, that’s a lead. I expect the police will want to go into it with you.’

Spinning around, he ushered the startled Jamie towards the door.

‘Is that all?’ the Scot asked, incredulously.

‘I think that’s quite enough for now,’ the Doctor told him quietly. He completed the process of pushing Jamie out of the repair shop.

Hall watched them carefully, following them to the doorway. The two strangers went off arguing. Satisfied, Hall returned to the bench. He lifted the box of the hearing aid from his overall pocket. 'Did you get all of that, Kennedy?' he said into it.

In the field, Kennedy was following the Doctor's progress with the binoculars. Hearing Hall's question, he tapped the transmit button on his miniature radio. 'Every word,' he replied. 'You'd better get going now before someone comes along and finds you. Don't forget to take that sheet of paper from the clipboard, it wouldn't do to leave any traces.'

'You don't need to remind me of that,' Hall grumbled.

'Think I'm new at this game? When do I get my money, Kennedy?'

'Meet me at the warehouse,' the observer replied. 'I'll pay you off there. Now, get moving.' He smiled to himself.

The plan was working very well so far. If only the Doctor had caught the clues as he was supposed to do. Their boss had been certain that the Doctor would. He seemed to have a high regard for the Doctor's intellect.

That was what he was relying on to bait the trap.

2

The Old Curiosity Shop

Jamie was having a hard time understanding why the Doctor had suddenly dragged him out of the hangar. There was something very suspicious about that Bob Hall character. Jamie would have preferred something more direct than the questions that the Doctor had asked, but he did seem to have gained a few meagre scraps to go on. As he strode along, Jamie was suddenly dragged to a halt by the Doctor.

'That's far enough, I think, Jamie.' The Doctor glanced back the way they had come. Jamie couldn't see anything to look at.

'Aren't we going to try and follow up the clue he gave us?' he demanded.

'Perhaps,' said the Doctor in a non-committal fashion.

His eyes were fixed on the repair shop door. 'But I rather think we'll

do better keeping our eyes on Bob Hall.'

'Eh?' Jamie tried to figure this out, without success.

'And why's that?'

They were standing beside two large petrol pumps. This was where some of the maintenance trucks refuelled, obviously. The Doctor dragged Jamie behind one of the pumps, all the time keeping his eyes on the repair shop door. 'Didn't you notice that his overalls were much too small for him? Most uncomfortable. And he didn't have the look of a worker who's been there all day. Too clean for that. And that piece of paper on the clipboard that he showed us – it was a different colour from the other sheets, and obviously a lot newer.' The Doctor gave a little smile.

'And he suddenly became very helpful when I mentioned the police, didn't he?'

'Aye, maybe,' agreed Jamie uncertainly. The Doctor's arguments sounded convincing, but there were other possible explanations for them all that didn't include Bob Hall being part of some plot.

The Doctor suddenly shushed him and pulled him back behind the pumps. There was the sound of footsteps approaching, and then on past them. Jamie peeked up and saw that it was Hall, walking quickly away from the repair shop. He no longer wore his overalls, but had on a neat jacket instead. As the Doctor had said, he looked awfully clean for a maintenance man who'd been repairing cars all day. Maybe there was some-thing to the Doctor's theory, after all.

Putting his finger to his lips, the Doctor led Jamie quietly after the departing man.

In the grass, Kennedy's face cracked into an admiring grin.

This old geezer was obviously not as daft as he'd sounded.

He'd worked out that Hall was as phoney as a nine pound note, just as the boss had said he would. Keeping the binoculars trained on the two men, Kennedy reached out and changed the channel on the radio. 'Kennedy to base,'

he said, formally. He liked this cloak and dagger stuff: it was much more interesting than the usual capers he was a part of. 'Do you read me?'

There was the sound of a clock majestically ticking away the seconds. It was a rich, full sound, echoing slightly in the silence. The room was darkened, with the only light issuing from a Tiffany table lamp on the large, polished oak desk. The brightly coloured glass of the lamp sent shafts of many hued light about the room. They picked out a painting here, a row of books there, sculptures on shelves and small snuff-boxes on ornately carved end-tables. It was a room filled with the clutter of a bygone era.

At the desk, writing on a sheet of paper in a neat and precise hand, Edward Waterfield paused in his work. Like the furniture in the room, he looked as if he belonged to an age quite removed from the swinging sixties. A thin, tired-looking man in his forties, Waterfield's suit was very Victorian. His cravat might be in style in Carnaby Street or in the court of Victoria herself. He wore gold cuff-links, and a small pin in his cravat. A chain across his lapel indicated the the presence of a pocket watch out of sight in his waistcoat. Small half-glasses were perched on his aquiline nose, through which he had been studying his notes.

He sighed slightly at the interruption and laid down his pen after carefully putting back the top to prevent the ink from drying out. Then he opened the top right hand drawer of the desk. Inside it lay a small radio almost identical to the one that Kennedy was operating.

Impatiently, Kennedy's voice repeated from the speaker:

'Kennedy to base. Do you read me? Over.'

Waterfield picked up the microphone and tapped the button to send his reply. 'Yes?'

'Mr Waterfield?' asked Kennedy.

'This is he.'

'This is Kennedy,' said Kennedy, rather unnecessarily.

Who else would be calling, thought Waterfield. 'The Doctor and his pal are following Bob Hall.'

Waterfield allowed himself a very slight smile. 'I knew that they would suspect him.' So far, every detail was working perfectly. The Doctor's TARDIS was on its way to the shop at this moment. Very soon, the Doctor would follow.

‘I’ll go on to the warehouse now,’ Kennedy’s voice said from the speaker.

‘Very good, Mr Kennedy,’ agreed Waterfield. Carefully, he switched off the radio and replaced the microphone very gingerly before sliding the drawer back into place. Picking up his pen, he unscrewed the top as he reread the last few lines of his letter. Then, slowly and meticulously, he began writing once more.

Bob Hall walked briskly to the car-park without once looking back. Once there, he clambered into a battered Ford Popular and, with a throaty roar, drove towards the exit gates.

‘Well, that’s it,’ said Jamie, glumly. ‘There he goes.’

The Doctor glanced around, seeking inspiration. His face lit up as he saw an idle taxi. He still had a fistful of pound notes in his pocket that he’d acquired in the past few days. ‘For hire,’ he told Jamie, pointing at the cab.

‘Come along, quickly.’

They piled into the taxi. The bored-looking driver glanced at them in his mirror. ‘Where to, guv?’

Eagerly, the Doctor pointed at the receding blue Ford.

‘Follow that car,’ he said, dropping a five pound note into the driver’s lap. ‘Don’t lose it.’

The driver suddenly grinned widely and gunned the taxi away from the curb with a squeal of tyres. ‘You don’t know how I’ve longed to hear them words, guv’nor,’ he said happily. ‘Don’t you worry, he’ll not get away from us!’

There was a gentle knock at the study door. With a sigh at this fresh interruption, Waterfield capped his pen again and set it down on the desk, parallel to the edge of the paper he had been writing on. The only sound in the room as he crossed to the door was the stately ticking of the clock on the desk.

‘Yes?’ he called as he reached the locked door.

‘It’s Perry, sir,’ came the muffled response.

‘Oh, yes.’ Waterfield nodded gravely. ‘One moment, Perry.’ He

carefully unlocked the door and drew back the bolt, moving in the same manner that he wrote – gently and precisely, as if he was constantly afraid of breaking whatever he touched. Then he opened the door slowly to allow Perry to enter.

Perry was his assistant, whose main task was to staff the shop and meet with most of the customers. Waterfield preferred not to be bothered with the day-to-day aspects of the shop and dealt only with certain special clients. Perry was very knowledgeable in the matter of antiques, and he possessed a genuine love for the items that he handled. He was only a young man in his mid-twenties, but bright and unfailingly cheery. He dressed conservatively, knowing that this pleased the clients who called into the store. They wouldn't trust a dealer who looked like he bought his clothes down Portobello Road. 'I got it, sir,' he reported with a wide smile.

'Good.'

Glancing around the dark room, Perry repressed a shudder. It was like the Black Hole of Calcutta in here.

'Like me to open the shutters, sir?' he suggested. 'It's a lovely day outside.'

Waterfield looked at him in mild reproof. Though the shop was only a month old, he had thought that Perry was more used to his ways by now. 'I have a choice between the sun and the noise, Mr Perry,' he said quietly. 'I regret shutting out the one, but at least I keep out the other.'

'Yes, sir.' That was quite true. It was almost as silent as a tomb in the office, despite the bustle and noise of the north London road outside. All Perry could hear was the relentless ticking of the clock on the desk. His eyes were drawn to it, and he whistled appreciately. 'I say, that's very good, sir.' He crossed to the desk and bent to examine the device. It was a pedestal clock, with a painted panel under the clock face showing reclining nymphs and shepherds in a rather flowery setting. 'A less than gifted student of Sir Thomas Lawrence,' he proclaimed. 'Just come in?' His practiced eye wandered across the details of the mechanism. 'Mint condition. 1870, isn't it?'

'Approximately,' agreed Waterfield.

'I don't know who your contacts are, sir, but this is marvellous.'

'Victorian timepieces are my speciality, Mr Perry,'

Water-field reminded him gently.

Perry nodded. They were establishing a reputation that was already spreading in the collectors' market as the best place to find any Victorian clock in perfect condition. 'I wish you'd tell me who makes them for you,' Perry said.

Raising one eyebrow, Waterfield replied: 'But then you would be as wise as I, Mr Perry. And that wouldn't do at all, would it?'

Perry shook his head in admiration for the clock.

'Whoever makes them, Mr Waterfield, they'd fool an expert.' He straightened up, already thinking of three clients he could call and sell this to in an instant. 'If I didn't know it was impossible, I'd say it was absolutely genuine.' He stared at his employer, daring him to challenge this statement.

Instead, Waterfield simply smiled and moved past his assistant to return to his desk. 'There was no trouble with the box?' he asked.

'None.' Perry realized he was going to get no further information about the clock. He had met with a similar wall of silence whenever he had asked questions in the past. He refused to give up asking, because it was always possible that Waterfield might let some little hint slip. If Perry could discover who made these clocks, he could offer the man a better deal than Waterfield could. He had plenty of contacts he'd built up with collectors. Cut out the middle-man – Waterfield – and he and the maker could lap up the profits themselves. Naturally he kept his intentions hidden from his employer. 'Bit out of our line, isn't it, sir?'

he asked, slightly embarrassed. 'A battered old Police box.'

Waterfield looked slightly amused. 'The whims and caprices of our clients is our line, Mr Perry,' he said in mild reproof.

'Yes, sir,' agreed the young man, chastised. So Waterfield already had a sale lined up for it. No wonder he'd spent so much time tracking down such a hideous and tatty old thing. Perry saw nothing out of the ordinary in it being collected from a hangar at Gatwick: there was no telling where you'd be able to track down a particular antique that some eccentric client or other desired. 'Odd, though.'

Sighing, Waterfield slowly removed his spectacles and tapped them in the palm of his hand. 'Mr Perry,' he said mildly. 'I pay you the sum of

fifty guineas a week, do I not?'

'Pounds, actually, sir,' Perry said. 'Fifty pounds.' Not that he would complain if it were to be raised to fifty guineas, of course.

'Quite.' Waterfield replaced his glasses. 'I hope I may be forgiven if I believe that entitles me to demanding less curiosity of you.'

'Sorry, sir,' said Perry, looking down at the carpet.

'It is, I'm sure you will agree, a princely salary?' asked Waterfield, pressing home the point.

'Oh, no complaints on that score!' Perry assured him.

His eyes wandered to the clock again. 'As long as I'm not asked to do anything dicey.'

'Dicey?' repeated Waterfield, clearly not understanding the word.

Perry explained, 'Crooked. Illegal,' a little embarrassed.

'You candour is refreshing, Mr Perry,' Waterfield replied. 'Even if your judgment of character is somewhat questionable.'

Perry tried to look shocked. 'But I didn't mean–'

'I know perfectly well what you meant,' Waterfield interrupted his protest. He knew that Perry's qualms were less because of his conscience than because he was afraid of getting caught and going to jail. He was unable to face the thought of losing a life-style he had grown quite accustomed to. 'Rest assured, I shall not ask you to do anything dicey.'

Waterfield was fully capable of lying with a straight face when it was required of him. He didn't bother telling the young man that he'd already done something dicey in picking up the TARDIS and bringing it to the antique shop. There was, after all, the small matter of it technically being stolen property. But if Perry didn't know this, then it wouldn't hurt him.

'Thank you, sir,' said Perry gratefully. He knew there were plenty of con games being run in the antiques field, and was wary of becoming embroiled in one. His collectors would hardly be likely to trust him if he sold them anything that he knew was a fake. At least, he amended mentally, a fake that could be detected. His eyes went back to the

exquisite clock again. What workmanship!

There was the sound of a bell from the shop floor. As if oblivious to the clock beside him, Waterfield reached into his waistcoat pocket and pulled out his watch. It was shortly after four, and still an hour and a half until closing.

'I think you're needed in the shop, Mr Perry.'

The young man nodded and moved to the door. There he hesitated for a moment. 'And the telephone box, sir?' he enquired. 'What do we do with it?'

'Do, Mr Perry?' Waterfield replaced the watch in his pocket, and placed the tips of his fingers on his lapels. 'We do nothing.'

'Right,' agreed Perry. Nodding, he went out to take care of the customer.

Waterfield locked the door again and slid the bolt back into place. 'Nothing,' he added softly, 'except wait.'

Crossing to the desk, he took his seat once more. Picking up the pen, he started to add to his letter. It was the only way he could keep in touch with Victoria.

Perhaps they would let him see her soon. Perhaps; if he continued to do as they had instructed.

3

The Net Tightens

The taxi driver let the Doctor and Jamie out somewhere to the north of King's Cross station. It was a run-down neighbourhood, with dingy, litter-filled streets and houses with broken windows. A branch line ran down one side of the street. Under the railway line were battered-looking little garages. Some of them had doors hanging off their hinges. Others were carefully locked. There were no people on the street at all.

'Bit of a bad area, know what I mean?' the driver observed. 'You want me to hang around?' He was obviously hoping for another fare, since he'd overcharged the Doctor outrageously for their trip here.

'No, thank you,' the Doctor replied politely. 'We're much obliged for

your help.'

'Suit yourself.' The cab slammed into gear, and drove off.

Ahead of them was a dirty-looking warehouse. The windows were filthy – or, at least, the ones that weren't broken were filthy. There was graffiti scrawled across the outside walls and the large wooden gates that led to the yard beyond. The blue Ford Popular was parked outside one of the side doors.

Jamie stared at the desolation. 'Do people live here?' he inquired, incredulously.

'Some do, I'm sorry to say.'

'Och, they must be touched in the head,' muttered Jamie. 'There's nothing to keep a man here.'

'Only poverty,' the Doctor amended. 'Come along, we'd best get on with this as quickly as possible.' He couldn't recall if this was the right time and place for the teddy boys, or Mods and Rockers. Still, if it wasn't those groups that prowled these streets when it got dark, there would be some other band of young thugs. The wisest course was to get back to a better area as soon as they could. The Doctor might be willing to face trouble head-on when it arrived, but he saw no reason to go out of his way to look for it.

Inside the warehouse, Kennedy stood by one of the grimy windows. If anything, it was even dirtier inside than out.

Battered crates, long since torn apart for anything they might contain, were scattered about the floor. Long discarded news-papers scuffled across the concrete when stray winds pushed at them. There were the remains of several fires, showing that tramps infrequently spent the colder nights inside here, sheltering a little from inclement weather. There were puddles of oily water under holes in the roof. Thick concrete pillars helped support the floor above. Holes in the planking showed how neglected the building was.

Kennedy dug in his pocket for a pack of cigarettes. He had been dying for a smoke all the time he'd been in the field, but he hadn't been able to indulge. He might have been spotted. Now he dropped the packet into the dirt on the window-sill and grubbed in his pocket for a book of matches. Flicking open the cover, he used his left hand to tear off a match and rasped it along the sandpaper strip on the bottom of the book. It flared up, and he cupped the light to the end of his cigarette.

With a sigh of pleasure, he took a deep drag. The book of matches he let fall on top of his packet of cigarettes, and the dead match he shook and tossed over his shoulder to join the rest of the garbage on the floor.

He tried peering out of the window, but it was so filthy he couldn't even make out whether it was still light outside. There was the cold remains of a half-drunk paper cup of tea already on the window-sill. Kennedy picked it up and splashed the grungy liquid against the glass.

Picking up a loose page of an old Daily Mirror, he rubbed the damp patch on the glass until he could see out of the window. There were signs of movement outside.

'Are you sure you weren't followed?' he called over his shoulder.

Bob Hall paused in his counting. He was sitting on a rusted, dented, upturned bucket and using the wreckage of a crate as a table. In front of him were piles of pound notes and fivers that he seemed to be having difficulty with. He shifted the ratty-looking cigarette in his own mouth to the side. 'Course I wasn't,' he replied. He eyed the piles of money in front of him. 'You haven't told me what this caper's all about yet, Kennedy.'

Watching the Doctor and Jamie walking down the street towards the side door, Kennedy smiled in satisfaction.

'Counted the money yet?' he asked, cheerily.

'No,' lied Bob. 'Not yet.'

Kennedy grunted. 'Or were you thinking I'd made a mistake? Given you two hundred and fifty quid instead of the seventy five you were promised?' From the expression on Bob's face it was clear he'd come to just that conclusion.

'We thought you'd like a little extra.'

'What for?' Bob's eyes narrowed suspiciously.

'You know those two blokes you spun the story for at the hangar?'

'Yeah.'

Kennedy inclined his head towards the window.

'They're outside right now.' He laughed as Bob jumped nervously to

his feet. ‘ “You weren’t followed”,’ he said mockingly. Then he winked. ‘But we’ll be ready for them, won’t we?’ When Bob looked at him blankly, Kennedy nodded at the piles of money on the broken crate. ‘That’s what the extra’s for.’

Bob’s eyes went from the cash to Kennedy to the door.

‘Now look here—’ he began to protest.

Kennedy did not let him finish. The trouble with Bob was that he was a sheep. Fine if you led him, but he had no gumption. He could be talked into doing almost anything, though. ‘You on one side of the door, me on the other,’

Kennedy explained. He lifted up two thick pieces of wood that had been torn from another heavy crate and offered one to Bob. ‘Straight over their heads. They won’t even know what hit them.’ This was not in Waterfield’s plan, of course, but that didn’t bother Kennedy much. He favoured action over plotting, and was privately certain that his employer was making his bait a little too subtle. It would take a regular Sherlock Holmes to catch the clues he had demanded be planted to lure the Doctor into his trap. No, far better to just smack them over the head. Then he and Bob could stuff their captives in the boot of the Ford outside and simply drive them to Waterfield. It would save a lot of time and effort.

‘Not me, mate,’ Bob protested.

‘It’s a bit late to argue, isn’t it?’ Kennedy nodded at the window. ‘They’re coming inside.’

Bob shook his head, almost in a panic. ‘I’m not getting mixed up in kidnapping, and that’s flat.’

‘Don’t argue about it,’ urged Kennedy, still offering him the stick. ‘They won’t even see you, I tell you.’

Still shaking his head, Bob started to back towards the crate with his money on it. ‘I’ll just take the seventy five quid and go,’ he said.

That was not in Kennedy’s plan. As Bob started to turn from him, Kennedy jumped forward and swung down with the stick in his left hand. Bob saw the start of the blow and tried to dive aside. He was not quick enough, and the wood connected with the back of his skull. The crude club shattered, but Bob went down.

Directly outside the warehouse door, Jamie paused and stared back at the Doctor. ‘I heard something inside there just now,’ he whispered.

The Doctor nodded; he had caught the sound of something too. ‘Have you tried the door?’ he asked, just as quietly. When Jamie shook his head, the Doctor gingerly reached around his young companion and gripped the handle. It turned silently in his hand, obviously freshly oiled, and the door opened inwards. He pushed it all the way open and jumped back, away from the opening.

When there was no sign of an attack, the Doctor moved into the doorway and poked his head carefully inside.

There was no sign of movement, but a man was slumped by a broken crate about ten feet inside the large, dingy room. Silently, the Doctor led the way inside. Jamie followed leaving the door open behind them to provide some light in the dark warehouse. The two of them crossed to where Bob Hall lay.

One of the pillars stood between them and the door now.

Kennedy edged nervously from behind it and tiptoed across the floor to the door. With a last look at the Doctor and Jamie, who still had their backs to him, he slid out of the doorway and vanished down the street.

Concentrating on the injured Hall, neither the Doctor nor Jamie had noticed either Kennedy’s presence or his absence. The Doctor examined the patch of broken skin on the back of Bob’s neck. ‘He’s just a little stunned,’ he announed. ‘Someone hit him from behind, but the blow only just connected.’ Jamie glanced nervously about the deserted room, as if expecting to be the next person attacked.

Bob’s eyes flickered open, and he stared at the Doctor, blinking and puzzled. ‘Where’s Ken . . . ?’ he managed to say in a hoarse voice.

‘Ken?’ repeated the Doctor. ‘Ken who? Go on.’ But Hall had closed his eyes again.

Jamie nudged the Doctor’s arm. ‘Make him tell us where the TARDIS is,’ he insisted.

Bob struggled to raise himself. ‘Ken . . . er . . .’ he groaned, then collapsed back onto the floor.

The Doctor chewed his lip thoughtfully. Hall had obviously come here

to meet another of his conspirators. It certainly looked as if the two men had disagreed over something. In which case, perhaps Hall would be willing to talk now. ‘See if there’s any water around anywhere, Jamie,’

he suggested.

The young Scot stared around the wrecked room. There seemed little chance of such a thing, but he knew better than to argue, and started to search. The Doctor stared past Bob at the broken crate he’d been using as a table and at the little piles of cash.

‘Here’s something,’ he called out. He picked up the cash, putting it all into a single pile. ‘Quite something.’ He glanced from the pile down to Bob. ‘But if he was paid for helping to steal the TARDIS, then why knock him on the head?’

‘Aye,’ agreed Jamie. ‘And I still don’t understand why anyone would want to steal the TARDIS in the first place.’

‘Yes, Jamie,’ agreed the Doctor. He stood up, leaving the money on the box. ‘That’s what’s bothering me, too.’ He was thinking aloud. ‘Nobody would want to steal a Police telephone box. It’s not the sort of thing you’d put a potted geranium in is it? No, whoever took it must have known exactly what it was they were stealing. Which means that they must know who I am . . .’ His voice trailed away.

Discouraged in his half-hearted search, Jamie returned to join the Doctor. ‘There’s no water around here,’ he said glumly. He eyed the pile of money. ‘This is an awful lot of money, isn’t it?’ Jamie was from an era when money was mostly coinage, and any script was probably worth as much as a man could earn in a week. ‘I don’t understand the value of it,’ he admitted, ‘but that looks like a lot.’

‘Between two and three hundred pounds,’ estimated the Doctor. ‘For this time period, that is quite a lot for what he had to do; put on a pair of overalls and wait around for us.’

He frowned. ‘In fact, why risk waiting about at all?’ The Doctor glanced around the room and saw the window where the patch of light shone in. It had obviously been freshly – well, cleaned was too kind a word for it but the dirt had been washed aside. ‘He could have gone off with the lorry,’ he continued as he moved towards the window.

‘So why did he wait around and talk to us at all?’ He stared down at

the window-sill. Lying on it were a packet of Player's Navy cigarettes and a book of matches.

'Found something else?' asked Jamie. He didn't see that Bob's eyes had flickered open again for a moment, then narrowed again to slits.

'I don't know.' Spinning around, the Doctor came back to Bob, who pretended to be still deeply unconscious. The cigarette he had been smoking earlier lay beside him. The Doctor stared at it. It was too crudely made to be a commercial product. He patted Hall's jacket pocket and grinned. Fishing inside, he pulled out a packet of cigarette papers and a tin of tobacco. 'This man Hall rolled his own cigarettes,' he explained to Jamie. He returned the items to Hall's pocket, and then led his young friend over to the window. Pointing to the Players, he added: 'Therefore these belong to someone else. That's a safe assumption.'

While their attention was focused on the cigarettes, Hall climbed to his feet, somewhat unsteadily. Gathering up the money, he stuffed it into his pocket.

The Doctor picked up the match-book and stared at it thoughtfully. From outside there came the howl of a train whistle, and the grinding of wheels as a passenger train thundered down the tracks towards King's Cross. Jamie almost jumped out of his kilt.

'What's that?' he yelped, grabbing the Doctor's arm. It was clear that he was certain he was hearing some kind of a monster.

'It's only a train,' the Doctor told him, trying to pry the thick fingers from his arm before they cut off his circulation.

'A what?'

'Well,' the Doctor said, 'it's a sort of mechanical coach.

There are these carriages and they're joined together.

They're on wheels and they travel on a track drawn by a—'

There was a sound from the door. They spun around in time to see Bob Hall dash out.

'Hey, you!' the Doctor yelled. 'Just a minute!' He and Jamie set off for the door at a run.

Hall pulled it shut behind him. Then he slid a stick he'd picked up through the handle so that it jutted out against the wall. The door was pulled inwards, but couldn't open while the stick was in place. Seizing his chance, Hall dived into his car and started it up. He wasn't aware that Kennedy was watching him from the corner of the street.

Inside the warehouse, Jamie tugged on the door harder as he heard the engine start up. The door refused to budge.

Glancing over his shoulder as he strained, Jamie called,

'Give us a hand, then!'

The Doctor took hold of the handle, having worked out what Bob Hall must have done. 'Let go, Jamie,' he said.

The puzzled Scot did so. Instead of pulling the door and causing the stick to jam, the Doctor pushed it slightly.

Outside, freed from the pressure, the stick slid out of the handle and clattered to the ground. The Doctor pulled the door open with ease, enjoying the incredulous expression on Jamie's face as he did so.

Still, it was to no avail. The car was long out of sight by the time that they emerged from the factory. They didn't know that Kennedy had slipped back around the corner of the street again. He was out of view, but able to hear them.

Jamie shook his head in disgust. 'Not a sign of him,' he complained. 'The only chance we had – gone.'

The Doctor was not so certain. 'There is this,' he said, holding up the book of matches. On the front was a large golden fleur-de-lys. On the reverse, the name and address of the establishment that had given out the matches. ' "The Tricolour",' he read. 'The name of a coffee bar, apparently.

And that's not all.'

Jamie couldn't understand why the Doctor was so interested in the tiny object. 'What else?' he prompted.

The Doctor flicked open the top of the book. There were three rows of matches stapled inside, with several missing from the left-hand side. 'Normally people pull out matches from right to left,' he said. 'These are different.

They've been pulled out from the left to the right.'

Jamie shook his head. 'I don't see what that means,' he complained.

'It means,' the Doctor told him, 'that we must go to this coffee bar called the Tricolour and hope to find a man named Ken something. A man who is left-handed and smokes.'

Jamie grinned optimistically. 'Well, now we've got something to go on.' He was quite confident that they would find their quarry waiting for them.

The Doctor hated to ruin Jamie's mood, but he felt that a few words of caution were in order. 'It's very little,' he said, apologetically. 'Maybe too little. He may have been to this coffee bar only once. Perhaps he had his lunch there today. There's not guarantee he'll every go back there.'

'It's our only hope right now,' Jamie pointed out. 'Don't give up, Doctor. Remember Bruce.'

'Bruce?' the Doctor echoed. 'Bruce who?' He couldn't recall ever having met anyone of that name in his travels.

'Robert Bruce,' Jamie said indignantly. 'Do you not know your Scottish history then? The laird with the spider's example to follow?'

'Oh, him.' The Doctor chuckled as he led Jamie off in search of the Tricolour. From the address on the match-book, he knew it wasn't far away, providing his memory of London was still accurate.

Around the corner, Kennedy listened to them leave. His face was creased by a large, happy grin. The bait was being taken perfectly, and the jaws of the trap were closing about the Doctor and his daft friend.

4

Further Curiosities

Bob Hall didn't need to do a lot of packing. Throwing a change of clothes into his faded haversack and snatching up his shaving kit, he was out of the door of the room he rented and thundering down the stairs before the landlady could demand her back rent again. He had money in his pocket now, and had no intention of handing any of it over to that old cow.

The job he'd been happy to agree to do for Kennedy was way out of hand now. Whatever that conniving so-and-so was up to, he wanted no part of it. He tossed his haversack in the back of the blue Ford and headed north. He'd had his fill of London. Let Kennedy find some other mug to do his dirty work. He'd find some safer con to pull in Bradford or Leeds, maybe. Anywhere but London.

Kennedy watched the Ford Popular speed away with another of his wide grins. He'd been afraid that Hall was going soft – maybe aiming to talk to the Doctor or even to the police. But he was just clearing out. Well, good riddance to him. It was one less loose end to worry about.

A short while later, he was reporting in to Waterfield in person. The antique store owner was in his darkened office, as always. In one corner of the room by the bookcase were a pile of boxes. Some of them had been opened. They contained more Victorian timepieces, artworks and assorted bric-a-brac.

'They were not aware you were watching?' asked Waterfield. He was seated behind his desk, his elbows on the polished surface, his hands clasped together under his chin. He insisted on a complete report, acting like this was some sort of military operation or something. Kennedy didn't care for that. He had done his own military service in the fifties and had hated it. It was worse than being in jail.

'No,' Kennedy assured Waterfield. 'They were too busy trying to work it all out.' He paused. 'Bob Hall was a bit of a problem, though. I didn't think he'd turn chicken on me.'

'You didn't hurt him, did you?' asked Waterfield.

Kennedy gave an incredulous laugh. 'Him? You're joking!'

'I assure you that I am not.' Waterfield's eyes rested on Kennedy's face for a moment. Kennedy shuddered. For an instant there had been a hint of some deep strength underlying the calm, almost mild, exterior.

'He's a lot bigger than me, you know,' Kennedy said, perhaps a bit too defensively. He'd been the one to suggest bringing in Bob Hall in the first place, and he didn't want Waterfield to blame him for Hall's failure. 'I just batted him one and that was it.'

'That was what, Kennedy?' asked Waterfield in irritation. 'I must know precisely what has happened. How badly injured was Hall?'

‘He was a bit dazed, that was all. He just mumbled at them and then made a run for it when they weren’t looking.’

‘And where is he now?’

‘Well, I went round to his place afterwards,’ Kennedy explained. ‘There he was, coming out of the front door like a cat on a greased floor. Piled into his car and off he went.’

Waterfield considered this. ‘Were you able to engage a hansom and follow him?’

‘Eh?’ Kennedy was completely lost.

‘Did you manage to follow him?’

‘Yeah. He’s gone up north. Don’t worry about him talking.’ Kennedy flashed a grin at Waterfield. It did not thaw the worried expression on his face.

‘Well,’ the shop owner conceded, ‘that disposes of that matter. Now, this is extremely important. You did leave the matches?’

‘Don’t worry about it,’ Kennedy assured him. ‘I left them. The Doctor spotted the cigarettes and matches.’

Waterfield nodded. ‘And you are quite certain they are the ones bearing the name of the coffee shop?’

‘Coffee bar,’ corrected Kennedy.

‘Yes, yes.’ Waterfield waved his hand impatiently.

‘I told you,’ Kenedy said. ‘It was the right stuff. It worked like a charm. I mean, I never thought it would. It struck me as being too subtle, like. But the Doctor was onto the clue right away. Regular little Sherlock Holmes, isn’t he?’

Waterfield pulled open the long drawer at the front of his desk. ‘Now, just one thing to be absolutely sure.’

Ignoring Kennedy’s exasperated sigh, he pulled out a wooden box and lifted the lid. The interior of the box was lined with green felt. A curious-looking key lay inside, holding down two photo-graphs. Waterfield removed these, not seeing the hungry look that flickered across Kennedy’s face as he saw the key. By the time he looked up, Kennedy’s face wore a bored expression once again.

The antique dealer turned over the photos. ‘You’re quite certain these are the people?’

Lifting the pictures, Kennedy made a cursory job of examining them. They had been taken through a telephoto lens, so that neither the Doctor nor the other man knew they were being snapped. The Doctor was wearing a silly-looking tall hat and holding some sort of recorder. The Scottish youth had been snapped talking with some pretty young girl at Gatwick Airport. Waterfield must have quite a team working on nailing this pair. ‘That’s them.’

The assurance clearly sounded too casual to Waterfield.

‘You are absolutely certain?’ he insisted.

Kennedy’s eyes flickered over the pictures again before he dropped them back in the box. ‘Yeah, definite.’

Waterfield nodded. He replaced the key on top of the pictures and closed the box. Sliding it back into the desk drawer, he closed it and he looked up sharply at Kennedy.

‘I want you to keep out of sight,’ he ordered. ‘Stay in the house and out of the front shop. On no account are you to talk to Mr Perry about any of this.’

Kennedy nodded. ‘OK.’ It was obvious that Waterfield didn’t trust that stuck-up little assistant of his.

‘OK?’ repeated Waterfield, frowning. ‘What does that mean? Yes or no?’

‘What?’ Kennedy couldn’t believe that Waterfield hadn’t heard the expression. ‘Yes.’ He shook his head, perplexed.

Waterfield stood up, forcing a smile. ‘I know my attitude may appear strange to you on occasions, Kennedy,’

he said.

Kennedy shrugged. ‘Look, if you want to play the Victorian grandfather, that’s your business.’ He nodded at the pile of stuff in the corner of the room. ‘You must have done all right out of the gimmick. You pay me well enough.’

‘It helps me to sell to the customers,’ Waterfield finished; a lame

excuse. ‘I sometimes forget myself in the character I have fabricated.’

‘Whatever you say.’ It didn’t bother Kennedy why Waterfield was so eccentric; as long as he was paid, he wouldn’t become too curious. There was one thing that puzzled him, though. ‘You know, you’ve never told me what it is you’ve got against this Doctor and his friend.’ He squirmed under the glare he got from Waterfield. ‘Some kind of vendetta, or what?’

Waterfield cocked his head to one side, like a bird.

‘Explanations are not a part of our arrangement.’

Kennedy shrugged again. ‘I just wondered.’

‘Imagination is a virtue,’ Waterfield told him. ‘But it can become a vice.’

‘Mind my own business, eh?’ said Kennedy with a grin.

‘I get the message.’

‘Good.’ Waterfield dismissed the matter without another thought. ‘Ask Mr Perry to step in here, would you?’ It was obviously a dismissal. Kennedy nodded and went out of the door. He didn’t quite close it behind him.

Oblivious, Waterfield opened the drawer and took out the box again. He removed the key and went back to what he had been doing before Kennedy had arrived. Crossing to the bookcase, he carefully removed one volume and laid it across the top of several other tomes. He then inserted the key into a small hole in the back of the case and turned it.

In the doorway, Kennedy pressed his eye to the crack, watching Waterfield’s curious behaviour. So that was what the key was for. Waterfield tugged on the case, which pivoted forward, away from the wall. There was a space behind it, some kind of secret room.

Kennedy licked his lips. He could almost taste the cash.

It was true enough that Waterfield paid him well enough for the work he did, but Kennedy was more than willing to make himself a little more on the side. Or a lot more. He had no qualms at all about stealing from the old eccentric.

The only purpose he could imagine for a secret room was to hide

away valuables. And if Waterfield hid them, it was up to him to seek them out.

The antique dealer emerged again from the inner room carrying another of the pedestal clocks. He set it on his desk beside the first before crossing to the room again.

Kennedy was suddenly aware of a sound in the corridor behind him. He looked around and saw Perry standing in the doorway that led to the front of the store. Unabashed at being seen spying on Waterfield, Kennedy jerked a thumb over his shoulder. 'He wants to see you.'

'Oh,' said Perry, his voice carefully neutral. 'Thank you.' He didn't move. Kennedy gave him a cheeky grin and walked down the corridor towards the kitchen. He fancied a nice cup of tea and a bit of a think right now. As soon as he was gone, Perry moved to the door and rapped on it.

'Who is it?' called Waterfield from inside the office.

'Perry, sir.'

'Just a moment.' Crossing to the bookcase, Waterfield swung it soundlessly shut again. He turned the key and withdrew it, replacing the book to cover the keyhole. He crossed to his desk and placed the key back into the box, but didn't close the box, and remained standing with his fingers resting on the open lid. 'Come in, Mr Perry.'

Perry moved into the room and carefully closed the door behind him. He had no intention of allowing Kennedy to spy on their conversation, but he saw no need to report to Water-field what he had seen – yet. He might be able to make use of Kennedy's interests. 'You wanted to see me, sir?' he asked.

'Yes.' The store owner glanced down at the box. 'I have an extremely important and delicate task for you to perform.'

'Yes?' the young man asked, crossing to the desk. His eyes focused on the second clock and he broke into a wide grin.

'Oh, I say! You've had a new delivery.' He bent to examine the clock.

'Yes,' agreed Waterfield.

'I didn't see them arrive,' Perry said, frowning. He'd been in the store since returning with the Police box.

‘They were delivered last night,’ Waterfield explained. ‘I have only just brought them in myself. It is an order for a new customer.’ He drew the two photographs from the box on his desk. ‘Please be so kind as to study these, Mr Perry.’

‘Yes, sir?’ Perry bent obediently to examine the likenesses.

‘This one,’ Waterfield told him, tapping the man in a silly hat, ‘is a Doctor ... Calloway.’ If Perry noticed the hesitation, he was too wise to mention it. His employer gestured to the second. ‘His assistant and secretary, Mr James McCrimmon.’ Perry nodded, and Waterfield settled hack in his chair, steepling his hands and peering at the young man over his knuckles. ‘The Doctor is an extremely wealthy and ardent collector.’

Perry was beginning to catch the drift. ‘Of Victoriana, sir?’ he asked, staring at the valuable clock.

‘No less,’ agreed Waterfield. ‘I do not know the Doctor personally, but we have arranged to meet in the coffee shop

. . . coffee bar . . . nearby.’

‘The Tricolour?’

‘Yes.’ Waterfield sighed and rose to his feet.

‘Unfortunately, I cannot keep this appointment, so I want you to go instead. Wait there and arrange for the Doctor and his companion to come to the shop tonight, after hours. Say ten o’clock.’

‘Ten o’clock, sir?’ From the expression on his face, Perry was expecting to be asked to work unpaid overtime for this meeting.

‘Yes,’ the antique dealer replied. ‘Don’t worry, it’s all right. I shall be attending to him myself. You needn’t wait.’

Relieved, Perry nodded. ‘Right, sir.’ He picked up the photo-graphs and slipped them into his jacket pocket.

‘Ah – the Doctor is notoriously unpunctual, Mr Perry,’

Waterfield told him. ‘I fear you may have a long and tedious wait.’

‘I’ll find him, sir,’ Perry promised. ‘Do you want me to go now?’

‘If you would be so kind.’ Waterfield watched his assistant leave, then

closed and locked the door. He smiled sadly to himself. Naturally Perry wouldn't mind the wait.

As in everything, it was all simply a matter of providing the right bait. The young man thought that Waterfield was unaware of his devious little schemes to steal Waterfield's best and most prosperous clients by doing them little favours. Perry would wait till hell froze over to win the Doctor's supposed gratitude and confidence. Well, good luck to him. The boy was ambitious and willing to walk the edge of legality. He would make a perfect antiques dealer one day. Waterfield had very little ambition to remain in the field. He had only one ambition at present.

Sighing deeply, he returned to his desk and took the key from its resting place. With the two photographs missing, it was the sole item in the small box. There were two other photographs in the desk drawer that Waterfield had removed from the box. It had not been an easy decision to make. If they discovered that he had been weak . . . But he was obeying his instructions to the letter: he had been ordered to acquire merely the Doctor and anyone who currently travelled with him. The two photos that were now in the drawer were of Ben and Polly. His agent had informed him that both of these young people had returned to their normal lives and no longer travelled with the Doctor. Waterfield saw no need to involve them in this matter further. He was not at all comfortable following his instructions, and was glad of any excuse to spare two innocents the ordeal that lay ahead.

He juggled the key in his hand for a moment. Then he moved to the bookcase, slid out the book covering the keyhole and unlocked the secret door. As before, it swung open silently. Waterfield walked into the room.

Now he had removed the packages, the room was virtually empty. The walls were bare. There was a wooden chair in the centre of the floor, and an empty packing case behind it. Against the far wall were two long, low, black pieces of apparatus.

They were each about two feet high and six inches wide, jutting into the room approximately a foot. They were placed parallel to one another, about eight feet apart. Both black boxes were of polished metal. Sophisticated panels set into them showed tiny pulsing lights that appeared to crawl just below the surface of the metal.

Waterfield had never liked or trusted these instruments, but he had little say in the matter. Gingerly, he tapped in the required codes.

With a hum of rising power, the lights started to pulse faster and brighter.

Kennedy had watched Perry leave the office. Grinning to himself, he slid carefully down the corridor and rested his ear against the oak door. He tested the handle slightly, to discover the door was locked, as he had expected. That meant Waterfield was probably up to something in his secret room again. Something that undoubtedly spelled money. All he had to do was to listen and learn.

He glanced around and saw Perry gazing at him. 'What are you doing?'

'I can't make Mr Waterfield hear me,' Kennedy lied glibly. 'I knocked, but ...' He let his voice trail away.

'He's busy,' Perry replied, barely concealing his irritation. As he well knew, the antique merchant could become so absorbed in his work in the study that nothing short of a bomb going off outside the door would rouse him. In the few weeks they'd been open, Waterfield had locked himself inside the study two or three times daily and not responded to any rousing.

Kennedy shrugged. 'OK. I'll try later.' Sticking his hands in his pockets, he flashed Perry a cheeky grin and walked back to the kitchen.

Watching him leave, Perry knew that the other man was up to something. But what? It was obvious that Mr Waterfield trusted Kennedy, but Perry had no real idea of what Kennedy's function was, and he certainly did not trust to his honesty. Kennedy knew nothing at all about antiques. It had taken only one brief conversation to discover that the man was a total philistine. So what need did Waterfield have of him?

Perhaps to do the dicey stuff that Perry steered well clear of?

Lost in his thoughts, Perry slipped on his raincoat, just in case, and left the store. He carefully turned the OPEN

sign to CLOSED and locked the door as he left. Kennedy never helped in the shop, and Waterfield was unlikely to hear any customers enter. Best to leave the place locked.

Kennedy watched Perry leave, then promptly headed back to the study door again.

5

Curiouser and Curiouser

The Tricolour had turned out to be as bad as the Doctor had feared. It was one of those theme cafes in which the decor and ambience were substituted for quality and taste.

Keeping faith with its name, the Tricolour was ultra-French. A jukebox in the corner alternated the plaintive warblings of Edith Piaf with the *très jolie* ebullience of Maurice Chevalier. The Doctor was half-expecting the *Marseillaise* any time now.

The tables, though indoors, were set out as if on some Parisian sidewalk, even down to the pointless umbrellas over them. The walls had been painted with impressionist views of what was supposed to be the skyline of Paris. The Doctor was thankful they hadn't attempted to reconstruct the Eiffel Tower out of lollipop sticks.

They had been given a basket of hot rolls and two steaming, thick, black cups of coffee. Jamie was stirring spoonfuls of sugar into his, hoping obviously to make it more drinkable. Most of his attention seemed to be on the waitresses. All young and pretty, they wore 'authentic'

French costumes – striped tops, berets tipped at rakish angles, short black leather skirts and black fishnet stockings that showed off the considerable amount of leg each girl possessed. The Doctor could see why the place was half-filled with young men. The coffee had virtually nothing to do with the appeal of the establishment.

Tearing his attention from the closest waitress, Jamie gave the Doctor a cheery smile. 'Don't look so depressed, Doctor,' he said. He took a small sip of his coffee, grimaced, and added a further two spoonfuls of sugar.

'If only we had some idea what he looked like,' sighed the Doctor. He was still focusing on the mysterious 'Ken'

that Bob Hall had spoken about.

'We'll ask one of the girls in a moment,' Jamie said.

'When it's quieter.' It was obvious that he was looking forward to chatting to any of the waitresses. So were most of the other young men in the place.

‘We’ve got to untangle this, Jamie,’ the Doctor said.

‘It’s all quite obvious to me,’ replied the young Scot airily.

The Doctor raised his eyebrows so high that they vanished into his untidy fringe. ‘Is it?’ he asked.

‘Yes. They’re just robbers.’ Seeing the Doctor’s blank stare, he added: ‘Thieves, you understand.’

‘No, Jamie, it’s more than that.’ The Doctor shook his head thoughtfully. ‘Nobody in their right minds would steal a Police box, thinking it was valuable. They must have known what it was, and what it would mean to me.

And then why leave that fellow in the hangar to give us a clue?’

‘Which we haven’t followed up,’ Jamie pointed out.

‘You know – Leatherman.’

Gesturing to the alcove where there were several public telephones, the Doctor explained: ‘There is no firm of that name. Not in the London area, anyway. I checked in the telephone book.’

Jamie wasn’t convinced. ‘There’s more places than London,’ he pointed out. ‘They could have gone south from the airport, you know.’

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor, glumly. He stirred his coffee idly.

Jamie leaned forward conspiratorially. ‘You really think this is some kind of trap, Doctor?’

‘Yes.’ It was the only possibility that made sense. But why such an elaborate scheme to reel him in? The TARDIS was the bait to ensure he stayed hooked. ‘If only we knew who our enemies are.’

Frowning, Jamie asked, ‘Do you think it’s the Chameleons?’ He had never trusted their word that they would accept defeat and leave the Earth, whatever the Doctor believed. ‘Maybe this is another of their schemes?’

‘Not the Chameleons,’ the Doctor said, slowly. ‘This isn’t their style. This is something more sinister. I can feel the evil closing in about us. Anyway, the Chameleons never learned about the TARDIS, did they? No, this is some older foe of mine. Some enemy that knows my ways.’

He had read the daily newspapers, which were stacked on the chair beside him, hoping to find some scrap of information that would help him, but they were filled only with details of the aftermath of the Chameleon invasion at Gatwick and the rampage of the war machines in Central London. All other news had been driven out by those events. Thankfully, his involvement in each case had not been mentioned.

Which meant that whoever he was facing now had searched him out independently of the news. This was not some casual trap sprung when his presence here was known. It was a carefully-laid scheme that had come to fruition only as he was about to leave England in the sixties. But who had the power and the resources to do this?

And what did they want of him when the trap closed?

Seated in the chair in the hidden room, Waterfield squirmed uncomfortably. The two boxes of instrumentation on the floor were huming softly, chittering back and forth in electronic tones very much as if they were carrying on a conversation. He hated utilizing this equipment, but he was never given any choice in the matter. Sweat beaded his forehead, even though he knew that the apparent heat in the room was an illusion born of his own fears. His fingers shook as he clutched the arms of the chair.

On the wall he faced, patterns scurried and danced.

There was no picture to be seen yet, but it would come once the link was firmly established. In the meantime, he would be heard. ‘I’ve done everything you’ve asked of me!’

Despite his intentions, the words came out like a whine.

Waterfield swallowed, and tried to sound less terrified.

‘Now you must tell me the truth. Do you hear me? The truth!’

There was only the mocking chittering from the machines: no reply from his masters. With resignation, he fell forward in the chair, utterly drained for the moment.

In the corridor outside Waterfield’s study, Kennedy leaned against the door. He had seen that idiot Perry leave and knew he’d be undisturbed. With a sly smile on his face, he pressed his right ear to the door, hoping to catch some clue that would help him discover all of Waterfield’s secrets.

The door was solid oak, and he could barely make out Waterfield's voice, but it seemed that the dealer was arguing with someone. He was probably on the phone to one of his lah-de-dah clients. What would those rich morons think if they knew that the apparently respectable Waterfield was up to his dirty little neck in kidnapping, theft and forgery? Kennedy sniggered at the thought. He had nothing but contempt for the rich slobs that sat on their backsides, eating and drinking all day, while everyone else worked their fingers to the bone just to survive. Kennedy was determined that one day he would join the leisured classes, and was more than happy to take any short-cuts that came up on his travels.

All the stuff that Waterfield had in this shop proved that the old faker was rolling in loot. It was Kennedy's duty to separate the money from its owner. Waterfield could hardly complain to the police. He would like to see the oh-so-respectable antiques dealer explaining why he had hired someone with Kennedy's record to steal, connive and kidnap for him. No, if he could get the dough here, Kennedy was home free. He had no fear of any retaliation that Waterfield could cook up. The dealer looked like he was on the verge of a heart attack every single day. He would squirm and squeal, but there would be nothing he could do.

Kennedy concentrated, trying to make out what Waterfield was arguing about inside. It was difficult to catch every word.

'But you must tell me!' he cried. 'I demand that you—'

There was a pause, and then, 'I'm talking to you! Come back!'

It sounded as if the other party in the conversation had rung off. Kennedy grinned to himself as he drifted away from the door and into the shadows. Who had Waterfield been talking to? It had to be some sort of partner; maybe the person who had put up the money for this venture.

Whoever it was, it was clear that Waterfield was just some intermediary in this whole business. He was getting his orders, and his boss was clearly not keeping him too informed as to what was going on.

Interesting, and perhaps even useful. Kennedy filed the information away into the depths of his devious mind.

Staggering out of the hidden room, Waterfield grabbed the edge of his desk and braced himself. Waves of nausea flooded through him, and

the room reeled in his vision. He could feel the sweat trickling down his skin. Each contact drained him – the forces involved in a simple conversation through the apparatus were incalculable. It was several minutes before he had regained his wits and sufficient energy to return to the bookcase and lock the small room away from prying eyes again. He leaned against the wall and wiped his brow on his sleeve. Finally he summoned up the power to return to the desk and collapse into his chair there. The key to the hidden room tumbled from his nerveless fingers and into its box.

Why wouldn't they listen to him? Why wouldn't they offer him some assurances? He had done everything that they had demanded. Was Victoria even still alive? He had little doubt that they would kill her if they felt it would serve their purposes. True, they claimed to bring him messages from her, but could he believe them?

With a sob, his head fell into his arms. He had no choice in the matter: while there was any chance, no matter how small, that they were telling the truth, he had to do as they instructed. Otherwise Victoria would be annihilated without the slightest shred of remorse.

How had all of his ambitions and all of his dreams sunk this far? From challenging the very forces of creation, he had fallen to this nadir – doing the bidding of creatures of such monstrous evil simply in order to keep Victoria alive.

Waterfield longed to return to the simple belief in the power of prayer. If only he could believe again, as he had once before, in a loving God! But his faith had been shattered by the creatures he was forced to deal with. They had burned out his heart and soul, and he could no longer pretend that either still existed.

But Victoria still lived. He had to believe that. If she was dead, then everything he was doing was too monstrous for words. But if there was the slightest hope that what he was caught up in might eventually result in her freedom then he had to seize upon it. Even the Doctor would understand that; if he could ever forgive Waterfield for the horrendous actions the dealer was about to set into motion.

Seated at his table in the Tricolour, the Doctor was taking sugar lumps from the bowl in front of him. He placed the latest one gingerly atop the wall he had been constructing.

His edifice trembled, but did not collapse. He fished another from the bowl and gently lowered it beside the previous cube. He hated

waiting.

He glanced up in the direction of the bar. Jamie had been conversing with one of the waitresses for some time now. She was short and blonde, with a cheeky grin, and seemed to take a shine to the young Scot. The Doctor's eyebrows rose as he saw that the waitress in question was reaching down, trying to stroke Jamie's thigh under his kilt. Obviously she was getting along better than the Doctor had expected.

Jamie almost leaped from his chair, ignoring the disappointed look on the girl's face. He hurried back to join the Doctor at the table, hardly noticing that he collided with it and sent the wall of sugar lumps finally tumbling. The Doctor sighed and dropped the lump he'd been about to add to the wall into the remains of his cup of coffee. He stirred the liquid moodily with his middle finger. 'Any luck?' he asked.

Jamie scowled down at the tablecloth. 'Why do I get all the hard tasks, Doctor? All yon lassie was interested in was what was under my kilt.'

'Well, you're much better at these sort of things than I am, Jamie,' the Doctor replied, trying to suppress a smile.

'What did you manage to find out?'

'Not a lot,' replied Jamie glumly. 'None of the girls can remember anybody called Ken or Kenneth.'

'Ah.' The Doctor didn't let his disappointment show.

Jamie was doing his best, after all, and it wouldn't do to discourage him.

'But apparently they have a different set of girls on in the evening,' Jamie finished. 'Maybe they'll know.'

The Doctor glanced up and nodded. Over Jamie's shoulder he saw that one of the cafe's patrons at another table was looking hard in his direction. 'I'm being stared at,' he said, quietly. 'Is there something wrong with me?'

He prided himself on his inconspicuous appearance.

Jamie tapped his head. 'Do you mean in here, Doctor?'

he asked with a smile.

'No, no.' The Doctor was hunting in his pockets. He usually carried a mirror, but seemed to have somehow misplaced it among the rest of the essentials he travelled with. He desperately wanted to check his appearance. 'Is my hair out of place?'

The young Scot peered at it closely. As ever, it looked like a family of rats had spent an evening fighting in it. 'No more than usual,' Jamie observed.

The Doctor stared down at his faded white shirt, attempting to brush some dried egg yolk off with his cuff.

'Do I look strange?' he persisted. 'Bizarre?'

Cocking his head to one side as if in contemplation, Jamie scowled. 'Maybe I'm just used to you,' he said.

'That's very comforting,' replied the Doctor sarcastically.

The patron who had been staring at the Doctor rose. He glanced at something in one hand, then slipped it into his inside jacket pocket. Then he stode purposefully across to the travellers. 'I beg your pardon,' he said deferentially.

'Not at all,' replied the Doctor, favouring him with a grin. So the young man had been staring at him to try and identify him! That explained everything. It was a great relief to realize that he was still both inconspicuous and impeccably attired.

'It is Doctor Calloway, isn't it?' the stranger continued.

'Doctor?' Jamie frowned. He hadn't yet realized that the newcomer had been looking for them.

Perry glanced at Jamie. And Mister McCrimmon?'

'Aye,' the Scot agreed, 'I'm Jamie McCrimmon.' He still hadn't caught on.

'My card.' Perry produced the business card from his jacket and handed it to the Doctor with a flourish.

After glancing at it, the Doctor looked up. 'Mister Perry.

Well, what can I do for you?'

Perry smiled his best keep-the-customers-happy smile.

‘It’s what I can do for you, sir. Mister Waterfield asked me to tell you that he’s very sorry, but he is not able to meet you here as he arranged.’

‘Oh,’ said the Doctor, trying to look disappointed.

‘What a pity.’ He ignored the look of bewilderment on Jamie’s face, and gently kicked him in the shins under the table to stop him making any fuss. Jamie subsided, rubbing his leg.

Perry continued brightly, ‘But he said that if you’d care to come to the shop at ten tonight, he’d be there and see to you personally.’

The Doctor paused, looking as if he were considering the matter. ‘Very well,’ he said finally. ‘We’ll be there.’

Nodding, Perry gave a slight bow and then hurried off.

Jamie watched him leave the Tricolour, then turned to glare at the Doctor. ‘And just what was all that about?’ he demanded.

The Doctor stared at the card he still held in his hand.

‘Edward Waterfield,’ he read, slowly, savouring each word.

‘Genuine Victoriana.’

‘It can’t be a mistake,’ Jamie added. ‘He got your name wrong, but he did know mine.’

‘Perhaps,’ suggested the Doctor, ‘our mysterious Ken or Kenneth has found us.’

‘Eh?’

Holding out the card for Jamie to inspect, the Doctor pointed to the bottom line. ‘K Perry, Esq. Kenneth, do you think?’ He chewed his lower lip. Contact had clearly been made. The bait was played, and the spider had just invited the flies to a party in his parlour. ‘Yes,’ he mused, ‘I think we shall indeed meet Mister Edward Waterfield.’

6

Kennedy’s Assassination

‘And he definitely said he would be here?’ Waterfield repeated as he strode from his desk to the door of his study.

Following closely on his heels, Perry nodded. ‘Yes, sir.’

This Doctor Calloway must be a very important client: the boss was unusually perturbed about the impending meeting. Perry was certain he’d made a good mark on the Doctor. If he could wean the man away from Waterfield very gently, it might mean a lot of profit heading his way in the near future.

‘Good,’ said Waterfield approvingly. Once Perry was out of the study, he turned and locked the door carefully behind them. Then he dropped the key into his waistcoat pocket. ‘You’ve done excellently, Mister Perry. Good night.’

Perry smiled obsequiously. ‘Thank you, sir. See you in the morning.’

‘Um?’ Waterfield glanced up, preoccupied, then shook his head as if to clear it. ‘Oh. Yes. Yes, in the morning.’ He didn’t sound too certain about that.

Mentally shrugging, Perry crossed to the coat-rack and pulled on his mackintosh. The boss was being unusually odd this evening. This meeting with Doc Calloway really had him rattled. As he buttoned up his coat, Perry gave Waterfield a nod, then he walked into the main shop.

Alone, Waterfield waited until he heard the front door to the store open and then close. The lock gave a satisfying snick. Waterfield smiled slightly, then turned to face the kitchen. ‘Kennedy!’ he called. ‘Kennedy!’

The thug appeared in the doorway, the wreckage of a corned beef sandwich in his hand. He was in his shirt-sleeves and had obviously been relaxing.

‘The Doctor’s coming here tonight,’ Waterfield informed him. ‘I shall want you to help me. Put some warm clothes on. Dark things.’

Kennedy nodded, then finished his sandwich in a single gulp. Brushing the crumbs from his fingers off on his trousers, he nodded. ‘All right.’ Whatever was planned for this evening it meant more work, more money and a bigger hold over Waterfield. ‘I’d better make sure that police box is well covered over, too, in case the Doctor starts snooping about.’

‘Yes,’ agreed Waterfield. It was a detail he had forgotten about. ‘I shall return before the Doctor arrives. I’ll trust you to take care of things.’ He moved down the corridor and then up the stairs.

Kennedy watched him go. He was going to take a rest, obviously. That meant he had an hour to himself. ‘Yes,’ he said softly, ‘I’ll take care of things.’ He crossed to the study door and gently tested the handle. Locked, as he’d expected. Not to worry; there were ways around that. He took a small thin rod from his back pocket. It was the work of five seconds to jimmy the lock. It clicked back quietly, and this time the handle turned under his grasp.

Maybe he would wait to help Waterfield, and maybe he wouldn’t. It all depended on what he discovered in the study. He knew that Waterfield kept an enormous sum of cash hidden in there. He had watched carefully when he had been paid for his jobs. And now he knew the secret of the box from his earlier spying.

He slipped back to the kitchen silently and collected his bag and jacket. Then he returned to the study and moved inside. Closing the door carefully, he hurried across to the desk. Tossing the bag and jacket onto the chair, he started to go through the drawers. The antiques he ignored as too hard to fence, and not worth it. There were few papers, but he was not interested in those. He found the box he had been looking for in the wide drawer. It was locked, but that didn’t bother him. Using his lock-pick again, he had the lid open. Grabbing the key, he dropped the box back into the drawer. If he was disturbed, it would save him time trying to make the place look unvisited.

Armed with the key, he moved to the bookcase. He frowned in concentration as he tried to recall which book Waterfield had pulled out. Then he grinned: a first edition of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*! That had to be it. He removed the volume, and saw the black hole in the wall.

Bingo. Now to see what the prize was. He slipped the key into the lock and twisted it.

The bookcase and wall swung open, as it had for Waterfield.

Kennedy entered the room that was now revealed. The lighting was dim, but he could make out enough. Aside from two protruding boxes on the floor and a single chair, the room appeared to be completely empty.

Was it possible? Kennedy scowled to himself. He knew that this was

where Waterfield had to be hiding his treasures, so it stood to reason that his safe was in here somewhere too. It was just a matter of discovering where.

One of the boxes, perhaps?

He knelt down between them, studying them. If these contained a safe, it had to be like no safe he had ever seen before. His fingers idly moved across the surface of the closest box. Lights sprang into life, and he snatched his hand back, scared. Was this some kind of alarm system?

There was a faint humming from the boxes, but no bells or other signs he'd tripped any alarm. After a moment his heart slowed back down to its normal pace. He had been careless, but there was no harm done.

Ignoring the boxes, he stared around the hidden room.

Waterfield was an old-fashioned bloke, with thought processes as out-of-date as his antiques. Kennedy was absolutely certain that his employer would have equally ancient ideas about safes. It was bound to be hidden in the walls somewhere. Crossing to the side wall, he started to tap gently listening to the muffled sounds he produced.

There it was! There was a hollow sound as he tapped about face height. Just as he'd suspected, Waterfield had the safe installed and hidden in the wall. Talk about stupid. He felt along the wall unit he detected the tiny ridges of the door. Then, using his lock-pick, he pried at the edge and a small cover popped open. Behind it was a safe door and a combination lock.

That could complicate things a bit. He glanced at his watch. Ten to nine. If the Doctor was due at ten, that gave him about forty five minutes leeway before he'd have to leave the room and get ready. Was it enough time? He wasn't really a lock man, but he'd broken a couple in his time. Should he have a go, or close up and try again later, maybe bringing in a partner to crack the lock?

On a sudden impulse, he tried the safe handle. It moved easily. Bloody hell! Waterfield really was an idiot. He hadn't even remembered to lock this stupid safe. Grinning from ear to ear, Kennedy swung open the safe door and gazed happily on the stack of fivers and tenners he could see. There had to be a few thousand quid in that lot. He started to help himself, then realized he was going to need his bag to carry this pile of loot. Waterfield could whistle for his help tonight. He would be the other side of London, spending some of this.

He turned to go and fetch his bag, then froze in fear.

Absorbed in his efforts, he hadn't realized that the lights in the black boxes on the floor had been changing. They had grown in intensity, flashing and chasing one another inside the black surfaces like insane insects. The humming sound had increased with the power build-up.

Standing between the two boxes was a nightmarish shape that had somehow appeared out of thin air.

It was about five feet or so tall, and completely metallic.

Shaped vaguely like an immense pepperpot, the thing was covered along the bottom half in bumps. It had some sort of skirt about it, like the bumpers on dodgem cars in the fun-fairs. The top half of the construction had three protruding rods of different shapes. It was circled by some sort of grating. On the top of the dome were two large bulbs, neither lit. Kennedy would have taken it for some kind of dreadful modern idea of sculpture, except that Waterfield never touched anything modern. Besides this, the three protrusions were moving. One looked like some sort of camera lens, mounted on top of the dome. A second was a sucker on a stick. The third was a hollow rod.

It looked like the kind of robot that the BBC might have dreamed up for *Out Of The Unknown* or one of those daft *Quatermass* serials of theirs. But what was it doing in Water-field's secret room? And how had it got here?

Then, as the lights on the dome flashed, the thing spoke, in a grating, mechanical voice:

'Who are you?'

Kennedy staggered back against the wall, all thoughts of money gone. *It spoke! It somehow knew he was here!* He shook his head in horror. Was this some kind of ulta-modern security system he had somehow set into motion?

It was capable of recognizing people, for God's sake! Or was it linked somehow to some remote observing station?

Was some watcher getting his attempted theft on film to use as evidence later? Was that what was happening?

The thing was not very patient. 'Who are you?' it repeated, in the

same robotic tones. ‘Answer!’ The third appendage waved at Kennedy as if in anger.

The would-be thief’s nerves could take no more strain.

With a strangled gasp of shock, Kennedy bolted through the open door.

The Dalek spun on the spot to align its weapon, and fired.

Half-way to the door, Kennedy stiffened and screamed.

The laser-like rays washed over his entire body, ripping apart every single living cell in its deadly radiation beam.

Then the blast cut off. Kennedy – the stark stare of sheer uncomprehending terror burnt into his face – collapsed forward to the carpet.

The eye-stick of the Dalek examined the fallen human.

As expected, the target had been exterminated. The Dalek was still positioned between the two metal devices. The lights in the panels pulsed with life, and the whine increased in strength.

Slowly, the Dalek faded away, like Alice’s Cheshire cat.

Only in this case, there was no smile left till the end, only the glint of light on the metallic casing of the Dalek. The lights in the apparatus on the floor slowed and faded back into blackness.

In the office, Kennedy’s corpse smoked slightly.

7

The Net Tightens

The only sound in the shop was the monotonous ticking of the many Victorian clocks that Waterfield had on display.

Each of them was set to the correct time, showing it was 9:27. There was no light on inside the shop, but the objects for sale were bathed in the pale glow cast by a nearby street-lamp. From time to time the headlights of passing cars flashed across the displays, causing shadows to writhe and leap about the antiques.

The entrance to the store was a solid oak door with a frosted glass

window set into it. The words: EDWARD

WATERFIELD, GENUINE VICTORIANA and the shop's telephone number were painted onto the glass. A small card in the window showed the hours of business.

The shop had been closed for several hours now.

The Doctor and Jamie sauntered past the window, acting like casual passers-by intrigued by the objects they could half-see in the gloomy shop. As he bent to perform this pantomime, the Doctor's eyes whipped about the street. There were no other pedestrians close enough to view his actions with suspicion. Quickly, he pulled an old ID badge he had collected once from a pocket. It was laminated plastic, perfect for his purposes. Standing on tiptoe, he slid the edge of the card through the small gap at the top of the door until he felt it touch the trigger of the inevitable doorbell. Holding the card in place to stop the bell ringing, he tried the door.

It opened silently, and the Doctor pushed it wide enough to allow him to slide inside. Jamie followed him.

The Doctor closed the door gently, then carefully removed the card to replace the bell switch. He stuffed the card back into his pocket, tapped the side of his nose and gave Jamie a big grin.

The dour Scot scowled. 'I don't know what you're so cautious about,' he complained.

The Doctor waved his hands frantically. 'Ssshhh!' he hissed.

Lowering his voice a little, Jamie continued: 'They left the door open for us, didn't they?'

The Doctor didn't answer. He was carefully scanning the room, looking for any sign of tripwires or other evidence of a trap. He was well aware that he and Jamie had just been invited into their unknown enemy's lair and had to be prepared for the worst.

The clocks all hit the half-hour together. There was a chorus of chiming and ringing from all over the store.

Jamie jumped, then glanced at the nearest grandfather clock. 'It's only half-past nine,' he pointed out.

'Yes, I know that, Jamie,' agreed the Doctor. He continued to stare

into the shadows.

‘But they made the appointment for ten,’ Jamie continued. ‘Why did you come so early?’

‘It’s the early bird that catches the worm,’ replied the Doctor. He pulled out an old pocket watch from his baggy trousers and compared it to the grandfather clock. It was running fast again, so he adjusted the dial, then dropped it back into his pocket. ‘Now do be quiet, there’s a good fellow.’ He held up a warning finger. ‘And don’t knock anything over.’ He set off towards the door at the rear, brushing a plinth as he did so. The tall, expensive-looking mock-Chinese vase on the plinth swayed and fell.

Jamie caught it before it could hit the floor. He gave the Doctor’s back a filthy glower as he replaced the vase. It was not worth mentioning the incident – the Doctor hadn’t noticed that he’d ignored his own advice. He was completely absorbed in studying the antiques offered for sale.

He picked up a solid silver tray and examined the workman-ship. ‘Hand-hammered gadroon,’ he murmured.

‘Exquisite craftsmanship.’ Putting it back, he picked up a carved wooden snuff-box, favouring this with a few hearty sniffs. ‘Expensive lacquer-work,’ he pointed out. A silver cruet set, several of the ornate pedestal clocks and one of the vases underwent similar scrutiny.

Jamie was wondering if the Doctor was here to appraise antiques or to find the TARDIS. ‘Is it any good, this?’ he asked, waving his hand at the assembled objects.

‘Yes,’ the Doctor replied. ‘It’s very interesting. In fact, Jamie, it’s quite extraordinary.’

Knowing nothing at all about antiques, there was one point that had sunk into Jamie’s mind as he looked at the items for sale. ‘You told me that this Waterfield is supposed to sell genuine Victorian antiques,’ he complained. ‘It even says it on the door. But all of these things are brand new!’

The Doctor gave him a cheery smile. ‘You noticed that, did you?’

‘Of course I did,’ Jamie said, indignantly. He was nobody’s fool! ‘The man’s a rogue.’

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor, uncertainly. ‘So it would seem.

Except ...’ He picked up a beautifully crafted box that was about a foot across and four or five inches deep. He opened the lid to reveal a tray inside. It contained pens, nibs and ink pots.

‘Except what?’ growled Jamie.

Smiling, the Doctor lifted the tray out of the box.

Underneath was a small space to store paper. There was a sheet inside it, covered with neat writing. ‘Except,’ he said, placing the box back on the shelf, ‘that all these things are not reproductions. They’re all quite genuine.’ He lifted the paper, examining it in the light.

‘That’s ridiculous,’ complained Jamie.

‘Then take a look at this.’ He tapped the paper he was holding. ‘It reads: *To one deed box four guineas*.’ He smiled again. ‘This is an account from a store, William Deering and Sons, in Canterbury. And it’s dated June the second, eighteen hundred and sixty six.’

‘Then it’s a forgery,’ Jamie exclaimed.

The Doctor shook his head. ‘If you were going to make a forgery, wouldn’t you try and make the bill look older?

Yellow the edges a little, crinkle the paper up a bit?’ He tapped the account. ‘This is brand new.’ He carefully replaced it inside the box.

Jamie thought through what the Doctor had said, then had a sudden flash of inspiration. ‘Hey!’ He slapped the Doctor on the back, almost hard enough to send him tumbling into the shelving. ‘I’ve got an idea.’

Wincing, the Doctor said, ‘Yes?’

Jamie gestured at the shadowy antiques, ‘These things are all genuine,’ he said.

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor, patiently.

‘But brand new,’ Jamie continued.

‘Quite correct,’ said the Doctor approvingly.

‘And that’s impossible, unless . . .’ He grinned broadly.

‘Waterfield must have invented some sort of time machine like the TARDIS, Doctor. Maybe he’s bringing all these things here from Victorian times.’ He looked rather pleased with his deduction.

The Doctor was suspecting something along those lines himself, but there were problems with this line of reasoning. ‘It’s not very likely, Jamie,’ he pointed out. ‘If he had invented a time machine, wouldn’t there be better things to do with it than to procure antiques for an out-of-the-way London store?’ He shook his head. ‘No, there’s more to it than that. But there’s one way to make certain: ask our mysterious Mister Waterfield.’ Crossing to the door at the rear of the store, he tried the handle. It was locked. Undaunted, he pulled a short length of thick wire from his pocket and started to wriggle it into the lock. This may take me a few minutes,’ he apologized. ‘It’s been a while since I had to to do this.’

‘Aye?’ Jamie shrugged. From his own travels with the Doctor, it seemed as if they were constantly being locked in or out of places. This was nothing new.

Waterfield came down the stairs yawning slightly. He had not been able to get much rest, It seemed like an eternity since he had last had a good night’s sleep. He was under too much strain to manage more than troubled dozes. And now there was no sign of Kennedy. It really was too much.

Kennedy was not the kind of man he liked to associate with, but given his predicament he had very little option.

For all of his naked greed and crude manners, Kennedy was efficient at what he did. And his help would be invaluable at this critical juncture in their plan. So where was he?

Clicking his tongue in irritation, Waterfield walked down the hail to his study. He gripped the handle as he fished in his pocket for the key. Then he froze.

The door was unlocked! He could clearly recall having locked it before he had his short rest. No one else had a key to this room, so someone must have picked the lock. Perry was out of the question; he was greedy, but basically honourable in his own way. And he lacked the ability.

Kennedy, on the other hand, had already shown his skills at dishonest work.

Waterfield threw open the door and snapped on the light, half-expecting to see his hireling rifling the desk drawers. Instead, he gasped in shock, his hand moving involuntarily to stifle his exclamation: 'Kennedy!'

The young crook was lying prone on the carpet. There was a smell of static electricity in the air. Waterfield hurried over, and knelt by the body. He made a cursory check for a pulse, even though it was quite apparent that the poor man was dead -- died in great agony, in fact, judging from the expression of terror frozen onto his corpse's face. What could have done this to him?

He became aware that the bookcase had been swung open and that there was a soft glow coming from the hidden room. Waterfield glanced at the desk and saw his drawer open, and the box within disturbed. Kennedy must have discovered that part of his secret, and died while investigating the room.

Moving to the open doorway, he saw thaat the portal had been activated. A single Dalek stood between the black boxes on the floor. Its eyestick focused on him emotionlessly.

'What has happened?' demanded Waterfield.

The Dalek understood his question. 'The human discovered our communication system,' it replied in its harsh, metallic tones.

The blood drained from Waterfield's face. He had seen the Daleks demonstrate their weapons, but only on non-living matter. Their armament fired some kind of static charge, he had realized, that somehow crumbled the structure of matter. Now it was quite clear how the hapless Kennedy had died. 'And you murdered him?' he gasped.

'He would have betrayed us,' the Dalek responded.

Waterfield was emotionally drained. He shook his head to clear it. 'But you don't have to kill!' he half-begged, half-cried. He knew how little value the Daleks placed on his opinions.

'Silence!' it commanded.

'I won't be silent!' he yelled. 'What are you dragging me into? You've destroyed a human life. Don't you understand that?'

The Dalek clearly had no interest in his moral qualms.

‘That is of no consequence,’ it informed him.

Waterfield could hardly believe his ears. ‘No consequence?’ he repeated, outraged. This – this thing had deliberately murdered a human being and was showing not merely no signs of remorse but even dismissing the whole issue as if it were not worth even mentioning in passing.

Waterfield had known that these Daleks were monstrous, alien intelligences, but he was beginning to suspect that he had seriously underestimated the depths to which their evil minds would descend.

‘There is only one life-form that matters,’ the creature stated. ‘Dalek life.’ It raised the gunstick warningly. ‘Obey your orders, Water-field.’

As if this were some kind of signal, the Dalek started to fade away. The transfer was complete, and it was returning to its point of origination.

‘No, wait!’ Waterfield cried. ‘Wait! What am I to do with the body?’ He didn’t dare look at it, terrified he’d see a look of condemnation and disgust on Kennedy’s dead face for dealing with the Daleks. ‘I can’t . . . I can’t go on with this.’

The Dalek ignored his pleas. It vanished, and the lights died down. Waterfield fell forward on his knees, tears streaming down his face. More than ever before, he wanted to pray for strength, for courage, for the wits to do something to escape from the hellish chains the Daleks had bound him with. But, as always, there was nothing but despair and fear.

The Doctor had his ear pressed hard against the inner door. He could hear nothing now. ‘Somebody was shouting,’ he told Jamie quietly. There was a note of urgency in his voice. ‘We’ve got to get in there.’

‘What about the wire?’ asked Jamie. ‘Can’t you pick the lock?’

It’s too pliable,’ the Doctor said, in a surly voice. The bad workman always blames his tools, he reflected. The truth was that he really was not up to picking locks. His skills were in more intellectual areas. ‘We need another plan. I think—’

He broke off abruptly. Jamie had caught the sound from the front door as well. Both of them ducked down behind the counter almost without thinking. ‘It may be a policeman,’ the Doctor murmured. ‘Checking on his rounds.’ He peeked around the edge of the counter,

glad for the cover that the shadows there offered.

Whoever had stopped at the door was only a vague shape through the frosted glass, haloed by the light from the street lamp outside. The handle turned again and the door opened a crack.

The bell tinkled. With a muffled curse, the new arrival reached up to silence it. The Doctor winced. That had torn it! It was bound to have sounded in the back of the shop, alerting Waterfield and his accomplices that there was someone in the store.

The intruder held the bell and closed the door.

Releasing the bell, he glanced about furtively, then crossed towards the rear door. As he passed in front of the large window, his features were briefly illuminated by the street lamp.

The Doctor raised an eyebrow in surprise. The skulker was none other than their contact, Perry.

The ringing of the front door bell broke through Waterfield's sobbing. Realizing that the Doctor had arrived, he knew that he had no option: despite what the Dalek had done, he had to believe their promises.

Otherwise everything he had done so far would be meaningless and, worse, there might be no hope at all for Victoria. One part of his mind told him that the Daleks were likely to kill her anyway, since they placed no value on human lives. But despite his despair, there still remained a shred of faith that all would somehow work out from this dreadful business.

Gathering his thoughts, he wiped the tears from his cheeks with a large handkerchief. Then he hurried out of the secret room and into his office. On the wall facing his desk was a small panel. A light was blinking on and off to show that the front door bell had rung. It was time to lure the Doctor further into the trap.

Treading very carefully, Perry made his way through the store to the rear door. His movements were almost comical in his intense desire not to be heard. Lifting each foot with care, he tiptoed across the supposedly empty room.

Behind the counter, the Doctor made frantic signs for Jamie to creep out the far end and come up behind Perry.

In the gloom it took Jamie a little while to understand.

Then he nodded and half-rose. Still out of sight of the skulking Perry, he scuttled around the end of the counter and into position behind the unsuspecting clerk. At the right moment, just as Perry reached the door, the Doctor sprang to his feet and said, softly, 'Boo!'

Perry gave a shriek and jumped back. Jamie's hand clamped down onto his shoulder. Even in the dark room, Perry's pallor was quite apparent. 'What . . . what are you doing here?' he finally managed to ask.

'Surely you know,' replied the Doctor. 'You made the appointment.'

'For ten o'clock,' protested Perry. His heartbeat was returning to normal now. At a nod from the Doctor, Jamie released his grip on the nervous assistant's shoulder.

'We thought we'd be early,' the Doctor replied. 'But what are you doing here?'

Trying to muster all of his dignity, Perry said: 'I work here.'

Jamie chuckled. 'Then what are you creeping about for?'

There was no good answer to that. Perry bit at his lower lip. He had hoped to be in hiding by the time the Doctor arrived, so that he could observe the negotiations and work out his own strategy to steal the Doctor's custom away from Waterfield. But he could hardly admit to that.

'I think you've got some explaining to do, Mister Kenneth Perry,' the Doctor said gently.

'My name isn't Kenneth,' the assistant protested. 'It's Keith.' He saw the frown that Jamie gave the Doctor at this news. 'Look, I don't understand any of this.' Perry couldn't see why this eccentric Doctor and his secretary would have arrived early, only to hide in the shadows and spring out at him. Why weren't they talking to Mister Waterfield, who had to be in the back of the shop somewhere?

'Keith,' repeated the Doctor. 'I see. Do you know a man named Bob Hall?'

'Not well,' Perry replied. 'He's a man that Mr Waterfield employs sometimes to do odd chores. Menial stuff'

'Yes. We ran into an example of his menial work,' the Doctor said

thoughtfully. ‘And he keeps some rather rough company. Including a man named Ken.’

‘Ken?’ Perry concentrated. ‘Could you mean Kennedy?’

The Doctor’s eyes glittered. ‘What do you know about Kennedy?’ he asked.

‘Wait a minute.’ Perry held up a hand. There was obviously more going on here than a simple business meeting. If the Doctor had run into both Bob Hall and Kennedy, then Perry was beginning to suspect trouble.

Both were very dicey characters and he could guess now why old Waterfield had been so willing to promise he would not have to do anything dodgy. He already had that side of things lined up. Maybe this whole operation was some sort of a con game, designed to fleece the wealthy Doctor, and maybe Waterfield was setting Perry up to take the rap. ‘This is all a bit too quick for me,’ he confessed.

‘But I’ll answer any questions I can if you’ll answer some of mine.’

The Doctor considered this. It was clear that Perry was in the dark as to Waterfield’s true purposes, and probably the true villains behind all of this. On the other hand, he was a bright, observant young man and he might be able to supply them with valuable information before he and Jamie had to confront the proprietor of the shop. ‘Very well,’ he agreed. ‘An exchange of information.’

Waterfield had rather hoped that he would have Kennedy’s help for the next phase of the plan. His death had not merely been a tragedy, but also made matters more complex. From a small packing case in his study he took a metal casket. The lid was hinged, and he opened it. Within lay two large ampules of a cloudy yellow substance, connected to an electrical apparatus. It had been his intent to have Kennedy ‘accidentally’ let slip to the Doctor that this was where the information about the location of the TARDIS was hidden. Well, he’d have to improvise now, that was all.

Stepping over Kennedy’s body, he took the box into the inner room and placed it on the floor between the two black devices. That was in place; now he needed the bait.

Returning to his desk, he rummaged about in another of the drawers and produced a copy of the photograph of the Doctor he had given to Perry. He ripped the picture carefully in half. One piece he placed for

the moment on the desk; the other he took into the hidden room where he positioned it in the box and closed the lid. The torn edge of the photo protruded, making it appear that someone had torn the picture trying to pull it from the casket. Then he set a small switch in the side of the box and carefully left the room.

'—and he told me that the telephone box was for a collector of curios,' finished Perry.

'But it belongs to me!' exclaimed the Doctor.

'But why is the telephone box so important to you?'

asked the assistant.

'Because . . .' The Doctor groped for an explanation that might sound convincing to the suspicious young man.

'Because of what is inside it,' he said. He saw Perry's eyes widen with thoughts of greed. 'And because it happens to be my property!' he finished, petulantly.

Jamie had stood all the blathering he could. 'Look,' he said, 'just where is it?'

'At the back of the building,' Perry replied.

The Doctor had suspected as much. It wouldn't be kept where he might find it in a hurry. But if he and Jamie could just reach the TARDIS, they could take off and leave Waterfield to plan as much as he liked. Though he was curious as to the plans of this odd character, he had a strong suspicion that he and Jamie would be far safer on some other planet at some other time. His curiosity would simply have to suffer. 'Is there another way in?' he asked Perry. 'This door is locked.'

'We might be able to get over the yard gates,' suggested Perry. 'You see, this door has an electric lock on it. Mr Water-field keeps a fairly large amount of cash in his study, in case it's needed to make a purchase. It wouldn't do to have anyone just wandering about back there, would it?'

'Oh no,' agreed the Doctor. 'Just thugs like Kennedy and Bob Hall. And thieves like Edward Waterfield.'

Ignoring the sarcasm, Perry continued, 'The only way to open this

door is by remote control from Mr Waterfield's study.'

It made perfect sense, and was a perfect nuisance. The Doctor clucked his tongue. No wonder that trick with the wire had not worked. He really needed something a trifle more technological for this. Like his screwdriver – which was in the TARDIS. If he could get through this door, then he could get the tool he needed to get through this door! Recursion again! He turned to Perry. 'You're going to show us this yard of yours,' he said.

The young man nodded and started back towards the front door, then stopped. 'I say,' he exlaimed, struck by a sudden thought. 'If it's a Police box, shouldn't we get the police?'

Before the Doctor could think of a suitable reason not to involve a constable, there was a soft click from behind them. He turned at the same moment as Jamie and Perry.

All three of them saw the inner door slowly open.

8

The Better Mousetrap

'Doctor,' muttered Jamie. It was clear that he felt that the door's opening at that moment to be anything but a coincidence.

The Doctor nodded, then pulled the door fully open and stepped through. He now stood in a corridor running back from the shop. At the end was a flight of steps leading upwards. On the right were two doors, and on the left a single door. There was a faint glow of light shining from under the first door on the right. Quietly, the Doctor slipped down the corridor and tested the door to this room.

The handle turned in his hand and he eased the door open.

This was obviously Waterfield's study. At first glance, the room appeared to be empty. Then he spotted the body on the floor and dashed over to it. Perry and Jamie piled into the room behind him, both coming up short as they saw what the Doctor had found.

'He's dead,' the Doctor announced grimly. The temperature of the body had fallen very slightly, so he hadn't been dead for very long.

Perry glanced over the Doctor's shoulder, then swallowed nervously. 'That's Kennedy,' he said in a hollow voice.

‘Is it?’ asked the Doctor, thoughtfully. This was getting more puzzling by the minute.

Perry leaned over the desk and grabbed the telephone from its hook.

‘What do you think you’re doing?’ demanded Jamie.

‘Getting the police.’ Perry started to lift the receiver to his ear, but a burst of intense static caused him to change his mind. He rapped on the body of the phone, and depressed the contacts several times. The hissing and snapping continued unabated.

With a frown, he replaced the receiver in the cradle.

‘That’s odd.’ He glanced at the Doctor. ‘I don’t think we ought to touch anything.’ He was an avid viewer of *Z-Cars* and *No Hiding Place*, and knew that the police hated people to smudge prints or to alter clues. ‘I’ll be as quick as I can.’

With a last look at Kennedy’s body, he dashed out of the room.

‘Why didn’t you stop him?’ growled Jamie. He knew how much the Doctor hated representatives of officialdom to intrude in things. It generally led to loud and insistent demands for information that the Doctor either could not give or else would be labelled a raving lunatic for offering.

‘He’s perfectly correct,’ the Doctor replied. ‘This is a matter for the police. Murder cannot be taken lightly.’

‘But what about the TARDIS?’ protested the young Scot. He could just picture trying to convince a skeptical police officer that not only did he and the Doctor, both of

‘no fixed abode’, have absolutely nothing to do with the murder, but that they should be allowed to depart the crime scene inside a box that aparently was the property of the police force itself.

‘We must find it before he gets back,’ the Doctor said.

He made no move to start looking. Instead he stared at the telephone. ‘I wonder what’s causing the interference.’ He picked up the receiver and listened to the erratic and perplexing static bursts.

Jamie wasn’t interested. ‘It looks like Waterfield’s cleared out,’ he announced.

‘Then who opened the door for us?’ asked the Doctor.

‘And why would he make an appointment to meet us at ten?’ He glanced at the clock on the desk. It still lacked five minutes from the appointed time.

Jamie shrugged. ‘Well, he obviously couldn’t have known he was going to quarrel with Kennedy. They must have had a falling out and Waterfield killed him. Then he ran away, to avoid meeting the police.’ It was so obvious that he couldn’t understand how the Doctor had overlooked the theory. ‘Come on, Doctor.’ he insisted.

‘Let’s find the TARDIS and go.’

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor slowly. ‘The TARDIS.’ He stared down at Kennedy’s body. ‘But how did he die? Limbs are stiff, fists clenched.’ He went down on one knee, turning the body over to reveal the twisted face. ‘He died in terrible agony,’ he said softly. ‘Look at his face.’ Then something caught his eye. ‘Hello!’

‘What?’ Jamie stared down. The Doctor gripped the hand that Kennedy had been lying on. Clenched in the fist was a piece of something. Prying open the fingers, the Doctor extracted half of a photograph. He straightened it out.

‘It’s your picture!’ Jamie exlaimed.

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor thoughtfully. It showed him wearing his stove-pipe hat. He did not wear it very often these days, but shortly after his regeneration he had taken a fancy to it. To the best of his knowledge, he’d never worn that particular hat while visiting twentieth century Earth, which would indicate an alien origin for this picture. Or, given the whims of time travel, perhaps he would one day visit this period wearing the hat, in which case this was a photograph of himself some time in his future. On the other hand, given the fact that this was clearly a trap, would he ever be free to return to the Earth at some future date? Would he even be allowed to survive?

The Doctor concentrated on the immediate problem.

‘He fell there,’ he mused, staring at the body again. ‘His hand outstretched . . .’ It was as if Kennedy had been facing the bookcase on the wall when he died. That didn’t make sense. ‘Jamie,’ he said. ‘Go out into the corridor and measure the length of it. Pace it out from the shop to the door here.’

Puzzled, Jamie nevertheless nodded and trotted out of the door to do as he had been instructed. The Doctor positioned himself beside the door and then carefully paced off the distance to the bookcase.

Jamie reappeared. ‘Fifteen paces,’ he reported.

It was exactly what the Doctor had been expecting to hear. ‘Well, it’s only five from the door to the bookcase.’

He tapped the wall. ‘That means that there must be another room behind here.’

Jamie grinned widely. A secret room! That was the logical place to hide the TARDIS away. So the Doctor had come through again, just when he’d been convinced that the eccentric traveller was being side-tracked. As the Doctor tapped the wall, trying to find some hidden control, Jamie started to pull books from the case and toss them onto the floor.

‘Hey, look!’ he cried. ‘There’s a keyhole here.’

The Doctor bent to join him. In the back of the wooden case there was a slot visible, clearly for a key of some sort.

‘Waterfield will have the key on him,’ the Doctor muttered. ‘We’d better find something to pry the door open with. A letter-opener perhaps.’

They both turned to face the desk. Behind them was the soft sound of a click. Together, they spun around.

The bookcase had moved forward a few inches, exposing the entrance to the inner room. The Doctor indicated with a jerk of his head that Jamie should join him in hiding flat against the wall. When there was no sign of hostile activity, the Doctor gripped the edge of the case and pulled. The wall swung open silently. He peered quickly around the edge. Jamie did likewise.

Inside the room stood a single chair and the two black boxes on the floor. Between them was a small metal casket.

There was no sign of anyone lurking inside to capture them.

Nervously, the Doctor edged his way into the room.

Jamie followed behind.

Unseen by either of them, the door to the study opened slightly. Waterfield pressed his eye to the crack and watched events unfold. A tic in his cheek twitched nervously. The mice had entered the mousetrap, but would they nibble at the cheese? Part of Waterfield's mind wanted to scream out a warning to the Doctor, to spare him what was ahead. The larger part could only think that this was Victoria's only chance. He kept silent and waited.

The Doctor peered excitedly down at the two long, black shapes on the floor. Lights scuttled about under the shiny surface, and a low humming sound filled the small room. 'Look at this,' he said to Jamie with enthusiasm.

'That's where the telephone interference is coming from.'

He knelt down by the left-hand box, running his fingers across the surface. This was nothing that had been manufactured on the Earth in 1966. This type of technology was not merely several thousand years too advanced for its location, but had been designed by some alien intelligence. His suspicions were crystallizing now.

One of his old foes had to be behind all of this. The problem was that in the course of his travels, he'd managed to annoy or seriously offend a large number of species. He did have a tendency to meddle with things when there were clear cases of oppression or outright evil, and he stumbled across such cases more often than he cared to think about. 'Yes, this is very interesting.'

Technology was hardly Jamie's strong point, but he caught sight of something that he did understand. 'Here's the other half of the photograph,' he exclaimed, bending over the metal casket on the floor. He picked the box up.

'Kennedy must have found it in here and—' he started to open the lid.

The Doctor was shaken out of his preoccupation when he realized what Jamie was doing. 'Jamie!' he yelped.

'Don't open that!' But he was too late to stop his impetuous companion.

As the lid opened, the electric circuit inside shattered the two glass vials. A cloud of noxious yellow gas billowed out into the faces of the Doctor and Jamie. Coughing and retching, Jamie staggered uncertainly on his feet. The box fell from his nerveless fingers, still erupting the fumes. In the thick cloud, Jamie pitched forward,

breathing raggedly, and lay still.

The Doctor struggled against the effects of the gas, but to little effect. It was a sophisticated form of nerve-gas that worked as much on contact with the skin as by being breathed in. His respiratory bypass was of no avail here. He held out longer than Jamie had because of his non-human nature, but after a few more seconds he could resist no longer. With a sigh, he crumpled and fell beside his companion.

After a moment, Waterfield appeared in the doorway.

He had soaked his handkerchief in the kitchen sink before venturing inside, and held this pressed against his mouth and nose. The gas was slowing down, having been specifically designed to dissipate quickly. With as much speed as he could Waterfield snapped the lid of the box closed, then jumped away from the remaining wisps of the cloud.

Crossing to the black apparatus on the floor, he tapped in a series of commands. A powerful vortex of air formed almost instantly, sucking the remaining gas into the centre of the room, where it vanished. Waterfield counted to twenty, then took his handkerchief from his face and dropped it over the casket. Then he stopped the suction device. The air was chilly, but clear.

As gently as he could manage. Waterfield dragged Jamie from where he had fallen until he was positioned between the two poles of the Dalek portal. Then he repeated the action with the Doctor. When he was satisfied that his unconscious victims were positioned correctly, he returned to his study. There was very little he actually needed to take with him. The need for this place was finished. The money in the wall-safe had to stay: he could hardly spend pound notes bearing the face of Queen Elizabeth II where he was going. The few items that he could not afford to leave behind he slipped into a small briefcase. Satisfied that he now had all he needed, he gave Kennedy's body one last, regretful glance.

I'm sorry, he thought. *I didn't mean for this to happen*. But it was much too late now for regrets. What had happened was over. He had to think of the future now, and the harder parts of the task that lay ahead. He hoped that he would never see the twentieth century again. It held nothing but painful memories for him. All that mattered now was to go home, bringing the Doctor and Jamie. Then, hopefully, he would be reunited with Victoria, and this terrible, evil nightmare would be over.

He carefully replaced the books that Jamie had removed onto the bookcase. Everything had to look normal.

Everything but the corpse.

There was the sound of the shop bell once more.

Waterfield saw the light for the front door wink on again.

Who could that be? Well, it did not really matter. Whoever it was would not find a living soul in the store.

Hurrying into the small room, he pulled the wall closed behind himself. Locked inside the room with no other exit, he crossed to the black machines. Reading from a sheet of paper he had removed from his desk, Waterfield adjusted the controls. The sound of the power humming through the alien devices increased in intensity. The tiny lights flickered and danced in faster and faster patterns. His briefcase tucked firmly under his arm, Waterfield stepped over Jamie and stood between the two black boxes.

The humming peaked in intensity. Light snapped out from the boxes, playing over Waterfield, the Doctor and Jamie like eerie, silent lightning. The three of them slowly faded away and the boxes with them. Once they had completely vanished, the whine died down and the lights faded. The hidden room became dark, silent and empty once again.

It had taken Perry longer than he had hoped to find a constable walking his beat, and a few minutes convincing the dour, skeptical man that he hadn't been drinking.

Then they had hurried back to the shop.

'This way, officer,' he said. 'Through here.' He led the man back through the shop and down the corridor to the study. There he gestured down at Kennedy's body. The policeman went down on one knee to make a quick examination.

Perry frowned. 'There were a couple of other gentlemen here,' he said, puzzled and somewhat annoyed. 'They seem to have disappeared.'

'Yes, sir,' agreed the policeman stoically. He stood up.

'This gentleman is indeed dead.'

‘Well, I told you that,’ Perry said, a faint whine in his voice. It looked as if Doctor Calloway and young McCrimmon had scarpered and left him to explain this to the authorities. What a rotten trick to pull.

‘So you did, sir.’ The policeman stared at the phone.

‘And this is the telephone that doesn’t work?’

‘That’s right, officer.’ Perry picked it up. ‘Listen.’ There was a perfectly normal dialing tone. ‘Oh.’

‘ *Oh* indeed,’ observed the constable. ‘Well, it appears to be working fine right now. Mind if I use it to call the station, sir?’

‘Not at all.’ Perry was very shaken by all of this. What had happened here? Where had the Doctor and Jamie gone? And where was Mister Waterfield? Hadn’t he promised that Perry wouldn’t get involved in anything dicey? What did he call a dead body, then? Was he going to be abandoned to answer for Kennedy’s body? He felt very weak in the knees. He suspected that he was going to be in for a very long, very unpleasant night.

9

Portrait Of Innocence

Somewhere close at hand, there were birds singing. A part of the Doctor’s mind that was just waking immediately classified them as *eremophilia alpestris*, the shore lark. A cheery little creature. Assuming he was still in England, he had been moved closer to the coast. The shore lark was only found on the east coast, from East Anglia down to around . . .

Concentrate! It was important; and also extremely difficult. The Doctor felt as if he had a very bad hangover.

He had not felt this dreadful since the night he had kept that Scottish engineer company, drinking that odd, potent blue beer of his. That had been on . . .

No! Concentrate! He must not let his thoughts slide.

Jamie had triggered the trap, some form of powerful knock-out gas that had affected even his alien metabolism.

What could he discern without opening his eyes? If he was being

observed, it was better to feign sleep.

The room was very light, that was clear. He could feel the warmth of sunlight on his skin, and a reddish glow seeped in through his closed eyelids. So at least twelve hours must have passed. It had been night when they had been captured. Unless Jamie's guess about the time machine was correct, as he strongly suspected himself.

There was something awfully familiar about the equipment he had been examining right before Jamie had blundered.

It rang a bell in his mind, reminding him of some sort of device he'd once seen. Probably before his last regeneration, which explained the fuzziness of his memory on that score. But it would come back to him in time.

If he had time.

Enough of that. Optimism for the moment. Why trap him simply to murder him? No – if the purpose of all of this had been simply to kill him, then that could have been managed any number of times already. There was some more sinister purpose behind this scheme than mere death.

Even if it was only so that the villain behind it all could gloat in his face before killing him. Until that point, there was always a chance he could pull some rabbit from his hat.

He opened his eyes, and immediately closed them again.

The bright sunlight streaming in through the large french windows was simply overpowering. An involuntary groan escaped his lips. That had torn it! No sense in pretending now, was there? Opening his eyes more cautiously this time, he struggled to sit up.

The room swam about him, and he swayed badly.

Someone appeared to be constructing a sub-space bypass through his left frontal lobe and using twice as many jack-hammers as they really needed in the process.

'Hello, sir,' said a cheery voice.

The Doctor managed to concentrate enough energy to keep part of the room in focus and he stared up at the person who had greeted him.

She was a young girl of about seventeen, he guessed.

Pretty, but a little on the stocky side, with a clear, ruddy complexion, and hair pinned under a small white hat. A severe black and white dress, with a pinafore, obviously a uniform or something. A guard? No, not likely. She was much too chipper to be a guard. Then he had it – she was a serving maid! Mid-Victorian, judging by the cut of her clothes. That fitted with Waterfield's interests, at least.

'Are you feeling better, sir?' she continued brightly. The Doctor was aware that she was carrying a large silver tray.

On it was a simple pitcher and two thick glasses. 'You did have a party last night, didn't you?' She giggled. 'The master sent this in for you, sir.' Placing the tray down on a small table beside the Doctor's chair, she poured him a glass of liquid from the jug. It was thick and red and foamed slightly, fizzing away as she handed it to him.

'The master?' he echoed. 'Mr Waterfield?'

'Oh, no, sir,' the girl replied, dimpling. 'Mr Maxtible.'

Seeing the Doctor's blank look, she explained, 'Mr Waterfield came back from abroad last night with you and the young gentleman, sir. Don't you remember?'

So that was the story. 'No,' he admitted ruefully. 'Not very well, no.' He sniffed at the drink, which had a raspberry tang to it. He sipped a little, then realized that they were hardly likely to be poisoning or drugging him right now. That could be, and perhaps had been, done easier while he was unconscious. He took a deep draught of the liquid.

The maid, meanwhile, turned away from the Doctor, and he followed her gaze. The drink did seem to be helping somewhat. His eyes finally came back into focus, and the buzzing and banging inside his head died down to being merely as loud as a riotous crowd in a Glasgow

bar after a Celtic-Rangers match. He took a quick look around the room.

He was on a couch that was covered in a dark green velvet. There were pillows with fringes where he had been lying. Sunlight came into the bright room through large french windows that opened onto a very large garden beyond. There were several small tables scattered about and a number of other chairs. The maid was looking sympathetically at the figure in one large wing chair. It was Jamie, still unconscious, but looking otherwise unharmed.

That answered one nagging question in the Doctor's mind.

The girl smiled back at him and nodded at Jamie. 'I'd best not wake him,' she said softly.

Nodding, the Doctor asked her, 'What's your name?'

She curtsied slightly. 'Mollie Dawson, sir.'

The Doctor gave her his Sunday-best smile. A Victorian maid in a Victorian sitting room. The furniture was all of a style that had been constructed before 1860. The wallpaper was the floral print style that was in vogue then. There were ivories from India and Africa, and other pieces of art that had been picked up during the colonial years. Nothing was out of place. Either he had run into some fanatic who had tried his best to reproduce the feel of the bygone era, or—

He held up his empty glass. 'This seems to be working remarkably well,' he said. He was feeling almost his old self again.

'Am I to pour you some more, sir?' asked Mollie.

'No, Mollie, thank you.' The Doctor placed his glass on the marble-topped table beside his seat. 'But you could tell me what the date is.'

'The date?' she asked, puzzled.

'That's right.' He gave her another winning smile. 'I'm feeling very much better, but I can't seem to remember anything. The date, where I am . . .' He waved his hand vaguely.

Mollie frowned and opened her mouth to say something. Before she could, a fresh, gruff voice broke in,

'That will do, Mollie. You may go.'

The maid curtsied and hurried from the room, past the two new arrivals. The Doctor stayed where he was seated.

He was not certain that he could trust his legs quite yet, despite the invigorating effects of Mollie's potion. Besides, neither man appeared to be armed or at all threatening.

The first man was a huge fellow. He was in his later years, but he was clearly both immensely powerful and also very intelligent. His shock of wiry white hair and flowing beard looked almost like the mane of a lion. Coupled with his bearing, he had the distinct air of leonine strength and majesty. Judging from the cut of cloth of his suit and his silk shirt he was very wealthy, and he was clearly the master of this house. He wore wire-rimmed glasses that he looked over as much as through, and had one hand clasping his jacket lapels and the fingers tucked into his waistcoat pocket. The other hand held the remains of a large cigar. From the smell of his clothing, he smoked a good many of those.

As the Doctor had been sizing him up, the man had been doing the same to the Doctor, and looked a trifle uncertain of his own conclusions. It was clear he had heard of the Doctor by reputation and was at this moment discovering that the truth and the reports did not quite match.

The second man hovered behind the first. He was thinner, paler and looked as if he was under some considerable strain. His eyes were bloodshot, either from sleeplessness or some violent emotions, and he had a slight tic in one cheek.

'The answers you require, sir,' said the leonine man with measured precision in his tones, 'might come better from me. My name is Theodore Maxtible. I am the owner of this house.' The Doctor inclined his head slightly, and made as if to rise. Maxtible raised the hand holding the cigar. 'Pray, don't get up. I have the greatest sympathy for your condition, since I happened to cause it.'

He pulled one of the chairs close, and sat down in it. As with all of his actions, he sat with flair and deliberation. It was clear that Maxtible was used to being the centre of attention, and liked to play up to the part. The other man moved to stand nervously behind Maxtible. It was clear that here the Doctor was facing the master and the employee.

'And this gentleman?' asked the Doctor, with a touch of acid in his voice. 'Edward Waterfield, I presume?' Maxtible inclined his head

graciously, while Waterfield merely wrung his hands, looking the very picture of dejection.

Scowling, the Doctor snapped, ‘You don’t keep your appointments, do you?’

‘There were circumstances . . .’ Waterfield mumbled, not daring to meet the Doctor’s burning gaze.

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor in slightly softer tones. ‘Indeed there were.’

Maxtible took a deep draught from his cigar, then stubbed the remains out in a large ashtray. ‘Please, Doctor,’

he said in his jovial growl. ‘First things first. You asked what date it was and where you were.’

The Doctor turned his attention away from Waterfield, who relaxed visibly. Interesting. The man was on the verge of emotional collapse. What had brought that on? Was he as much a prisoner in all of this as the Doctor was? Were they both fellow captives of this hearty Maxtible? ‘Well?’

prompted the Doctor.

‘You are in my house,’ Maxtible explained, ‘some miles from Canterbury.’ The Doctor nodded; that suited the evidence of the shore larks he had heard. ‘The date is June the second, eighteen hundred and sixty-six.’

He paused theatrically, but if he had hoped for some reaction of shock or outrage at this announcement of travelling one hundred years into the past, he was disappointed. ‘And just what do you think you’re up to?’

demanded the Doctor angrily. ‘You steal my property, spirit Jamie and myself a hundred years back in time and murder a man along the way.’ Out of the corner of his eye, the Doctor saw Waterfield flinch as that shot struck home, but it did not shake Maxtible.

‘I assure you, sir, we had nothing to do with the death of that man,’ he replied evenly.

‘I don’t believe you,’ the Doctor snapped.

‘You will believe me, Doctor,’ Maxtible stated, with complete

conviction. ‘All of us are the victims of a higher power, sir. A power more evil and terrible than the human brain can imagine.’

‘Power,’ scoffed the Doctor. ‘Victims. I don’t know what you mean.’

At last Waterfield spoke of his own accord, ‘They’ve taken my daughter, Victoria.’

The Doctor stared at him. So that was the reason the man was under so much stress. It was fear of what had happened to someone he loved. And uncertainty as to her fate. He found himself beginning to thaw towards the man.

He was clearly not the scoundrel that the Doctor had been picturing. He was instead a desperate man. Which might be worse than a scoundrel, for a desperate man might do the unpredictable, while a rogue is always a rogue. ‘And who are they?’ the Doctor asked him gently.

‘You will not be kept in suspense for very much longer,’

Maxtible promised him. ‘Pray, come with us and we shall show you how it all began.’

The Doctor considered his options. Then he saw the pleading look in Waterfield’s eyes. ‘I’ll listen,’ he agreed. ‘I promise.’ Waterfield looked pathetically grateful for this reassurance. He clearly loved his daughter very much.

Maxtible rose, clearly expecting to be followed. The Doctor clambered to his feet. There was a brief moment of nausea, which passed. He had obviously shaken off the worst of the gas’s effects with the aid of Mollie’s potion. He fell in beside Waterfield, and they crossed the room together. As they passed the mantelpiece, Waterfield paused to look at a painting, a tear trembling in his eye.

The Doctor examined the picture. Unlike the other works in the room; a genuine John Martin, a Constable and a couple of Turner landscapes; this one was a head and shoulders portrait. It was of a young woman, very pretty, with dark, flowing hair and bright eyes. It was not painted by a famous artist, but the simple lines and the obvious skill of the artist in depicting his subject made it all the more impressive for that. ‘Is that your daughter?’ he asked.

‘No, sir.’ Waterfield sighed deeply. ‘That is a painting of my wife when she was a young girl. She is dead now, rest her soul, but Victoria is the

image of her.' He sighed again, obviously torn by deep emotions. Then he moved on to follow Maxtible, who had not paused.

The Doctor took a final look at the portrait. This young woman looked so innocent and vulnerable. He could see why any man might fall in love with her. But what intrigued him the most was a question. Why was this portrait here? The rest of the room spoke loudly of Maxtible: the ivories, the marble tables, the genuine works of art that future generations would revere. And yet, in the midst of all that wealth, here was a portrait of Waterfield's dead wife. Why? It was both vibrant and well executed, but it was hardly on a level with the other pictures. Was it merely a sop to keep the tired man in line? Or did it have some darker purpose?

As Waterfield had claimed, his daughter Victoria bore a striking resemblance to her late mother. In fact she might have been her double as she stood at the window of her small room, except for the fact that she wore a different dress; and that she was exhausted from the ordeal she was still undergoing.

The pale brown floor-length dress with lace trim gave her an elegant, innocent appearance. But the room she was in failed to match her clothing: it was stark and virtually empty. In one corner was a simple bed, which Victoria had made up neatly. There was a single chair and a wooden table, on which was a metal tray. On this was a plate of congealed eggs, virtually untouched, along with a few slices of toast. A metal cup with water in it and a can from which the water had been poured were the only other items on the table. In the corner of the room closest to the door was the one anachronism in the room: a device that resembled a set of scales with a digital readout panel mounted some four feet from the floor.

Standing at the window, Victoria could barely look out through the thick metal bars. She was crumbling bits of toast and pushing them through the gap. A group of finches and one or two larks were greedily gobbling down the bread. She envied them their freedom to simply flap their wings and fly away, while she was trapped here in this miserable little room. She was by nature a cheerful young woman, but this captivity was sapping her of all her courage and good humour. Feeding the few birds that came each morning was the only diversion she had. The rest of the day she simply languished in the stark room.

And those were the pleasant hours. At other times her captors visited her, inflicting terrible indignities and cruelties upon her.

As if thinking about those dreadful creatures somehow summoned them to appear, the prison door swung open and a Dalek glided in. Victoria swallowed, trying to control her terror. She pressed herself against the wall, wishing she could somehow melt through it and run away. As the Dalek moved into the room, she was unable to take her eyes off the evil creature.

The eyestick on the dome surveyed her briefly, then spun about to look at the table. The eye then refocused on her. 'You have not eaten,' the Dalek stated. Victoria did not reply; she tried to crawl along the wall to the corner.

She was too scared to speak. 'You will eat!' the Dalek ordered. And, when she did not reply: 'ANSWER!'

'Yes!' The single word was almost a scream as Victoria forced it from her throat. Those blank, unreadable machine-things were utterly terrifying to her.

The Dalek's eyestick moved, and the lens refocused on the window. It registered the crumbs there, and the shapes of the birds beyond. 'You will not feed the flying pests outside,' it commanded. 'Answer!'

'Yes!' she squealed again.

The Dalek considered for a moment, then swung about.

'Move to the weighing machine. Move!'

Shaking, Victoria did as she was told, keeping close to the wall of her cell. She stepped hesitantly onto the machine. Instantly, it sprang to life. A faint electrical tingle shook her, and the all-too-familiar whine of the device attacked her ears. She tried to cover them to keep the sound out, but it seemed to reverberate inside her skull.

The read-out on the machine sprang to life, monitoring her vital signs, the numbers flashing and changing until they finally stabilized.

'Move off the machine!' the Dalek commanded.

Victoria jumped away from the terrible device, and staggered weakly to the bed. This daily experience always left her weak and trembling. It was as if the Dalek device was draining her strength as it measured her. The Dalek moved to examine the read-out.

'The weight of your body has fallen by seventeen ounces,' it stated. It

scanned the next line. ‘Your heartbeat is too rapid.’ The eyestick swung around to look over the creature’s back at Victoria. She cringed away, wishing she could just pull the covers over her head to make the monster disappear. It had always worked when she was a child, but not with these monsters. ‘Your nervous sytem is in disorder.’

‘What do you expect?’ she asked, tiredly. Then, from somewhere inside herself she found a small reserve of strength. ‘What do you expect?’ she screamed at it. ‘For pity’s sake, let me go!’

The Dalek ignored the words. ‘Speak only when you are told to speak,’ it replied. Turning off the monitoring device, it glided back towards the door. Then it stopped, and its eyestick swivelled around again to look at her.

‘More food will come,’ it informed her. ‘You will eat it. Or you will be fed by force.’ Then it moved from the room.

The door closed behind it.

Her emotions overcame her. Sobbing in despair, Victoria buried her face in her arms and fell forward onto the bed. Grief, self-pity and fear for her father welled up, bursting forth in piteous cries and streams of tears.

How much longer would this go on? How much longer could she endure it? Would her nerves snap, and send her plunging into the depths of madness? Was there to be no escape from this nightmare for her?

10

The True Enemy

‘Here we are, Doctor,’ Maxtible announced as they neared the end of a grand corridor. Between two suits of armour that looked as if they were intended to stand guard was a large doorway. ‘This is hallowed ground. Here we shall not be disturbed by the servants.’ He opened the door with a flourish and led the way inside.

The Doctor ambled into the room beyond much like a tourist entering one of the pyramids: determined to see everything, but with one eye roving in case of unexpected arrivals. Waterfield brought up the rear, closing the door behind him.

It was apparent that the room had once been a conservatory of some

kind, and had been converted into a scientific laboratory. The walls were all wood-panelled.

Previous owners of this ancient house would no doubt have cried out in horror at the damage done to the panelling with the wiring and apparatus now filling the room. At first glance, the place looked as if some glassmaker had collided with a wiring contractor. Tubing filled the room, creating vast glass archways carrying thick coils of conductive wiring. Shafts and tunnels of glass led from the many instrument-filled benches. In one corner was a primitive dynamo, though the Doctor noted that there were several von Siemens coils that could only have been invented a few months earlier.

The focus of the room was at the far end. A large wooden cabinet had been constructed there. Most of the cables and glass tubes led to this cabinet. Though it was primarily made from wood, it had a large glass dome and metal panels. The door was lined with insulating substances. Barely visible from this angle and protruding into the glass dome were large shafts that resembled lightning conductors.

Maxtible strode across to the nearest bench. He moved a large mirror aside and sat on a tall stool, one elbow resting majestically on the bench. He was clearly waiting for the Doctor to make some comment.

Sniffing loudly, the Doctor tapped one of the glass columns. He felt a faint tingle in his fingertips as he did so.

‘Hmm, yes,’ he muttered unenthusiastically. ‘Very impressive.’ He crossed the room to glare down at Maxtible. ‘And now, perhaps, you will tell me what this is all about?’

‘Patience for just a little longer, my dear sir,’ Maxtible requested. He looked a trifle hurt by the Doctor’s apparent lack of interest in the apparatus that filled the room.

‘Patience?’ exploded the Doctor. ‘Don’t you understand what has happened? A man has been murdered. Yet you’re behaving as if we’d simply gone off on a Sunday-school picnic.’

Maxtible shrugged. ‘But neither Waterfield nor myself were responsible for that man’s unfortunate death, Doctor.’

‘That’s perfectly true,’ piped up Waterfield, eager to disavow responsibility. The Doctor simply stared at them.

Opening a box, Maxtible extended it towards the Doctor. ‘Cigar?’

When his guest shook his head, Maxtible shrugged. He took one of the thick cigars himself before replacing the box. The Doctor noted with interest that he lit the foul-smelling thing with a twentieth century lighter.

Obviously the trade through time was not simply one-way.

His patience at an end, the Doctor wagged a finger at the smoking man. 'Will you kindly tell me what this is all about?' he demanded indignantly. 'Why have you brought us to your house? Who are these enemies of yours, the ones who control you?'

'Brilliant minds, Doctor,' Maxtible replied, blowing out a cloud of smoke.

'Monsters!' snapped Waterfield.

Again, Maxtible shrugged. 'Oh, I admit, Waterfield, they've acted callously.'

'They're inhuman monsters!' Waterfield cried.

'Inhuman?' the Doctor repeated.

'Creations of the Devil,' Waterfield said.

'Let me explain,' suggested Maxtible.

'Yes,' agreed the Doctor, eyeing the two men. This was getting very interesting. Obviously there was a disagreement between the two partners concerning their masters. But how serious this might be and whether he could exploit it at all remained to be seen. 'Please do.'

Waving his cigar like a magic wand, Maxtible was clearly in a talkative mood. 'I have always been fascinated with the concept of travelling through time,' he explained.

'Not merely as an idle daydream, but with certain practical ends in mind. One might be able to uncover the lost treasures of the past, for example. The riches of Troy, the loot of the buccaneers, the wonders of antiquity. Or one might be able to journey forward through time and then snatch the secrets of that age for use in this. Do you follow me thus far?'

'I believe I'm way ahead of you,' the Doctor replied. He had heard any number of such plans in the course of his travels, and had been

offered partnerships in many such ventures. Was that why he and Jamie had been kidnapped?

To try and use the TARDIS to plunder the riches of history? 'But please do proceed.'

'My family is rather wealthy,' Maxtible continued, 'and so I have the money to indulge my whims. Waterfield here is an expert in certain scientific and mechanical matters.

Together we constructed everything you see about you.' He waved his hand once again around the room.

The Doctor picked up the polished mirror that Maxtible had earlier moved. It had been constructed with astonishing accuracy, given the time period. 'To find a way of voyaging through time?'

'Yes.' Maxtible puffed for a moment on his cigar. 'This was my theory: a mirror reflects an image, does it not?'

The Doctor nodded. Maxtible gestured at the mirror that the Doctor held. 'So you may be standing right here beside me, but by the correct placing of mirrors I could make it appear that you are actually standing fifty feet away. Or vice versa, of course - you may be a long distance off, but appear to be quite close. Well, following the new investigations into electromagnetism twelve years ago by J

Clark Maxwell and then Faraday's experiments in static electricity—'

'Static electricity?' The Doctor frowned. There was something dreadfully familiar about those words. An awful suspicion began to take shape in his mind.

'Correct,' agreed Maxtible. He rose to his feet.

'Waterfield and I first attempted to define the nature of an image in a mirror, and then to project it.' Crossing to the large cabinet, he opened the insulated door. Beyond it, mounted on secure rods, was mirror after mirror. Thanks to their reflective powers, the Doctor felt as if he were seeing into infinity. Maxtible tapped the wall. 'There are one hundred and forty four separate mirrors in here, Doctor.'

Waterfield could contain himself no longer. Despite his nervous state, he was after all a scientist. He could not resist trying to explain his work to someone who would understand it. 'Each mirror is of highly polished metal, carefully and painstakingly crafted to be as perfect in

shape as is humanly possible.' He gestured to the mirror that the Doctor had just laid down on the bench. 'That mirror was discarded because of a minute flaw in the surface. It would be almost undetectable by others, but even so small an error could have been disastrous.' He gestured towards the cabinet. 'Each mirror was then mounted upon an insulating base and then subjected to electrical charges.

Initially, they were all positive.'

'Like repels like in electricity, Doctor,' Maxtible amplified. 'In this way, we hoped to repel the image inside the mirrors to any place that we directed.'

The Doctor was already way ahead of them. Such experiments should have been abject failures. But clearly something had happened, otherwise how had the link between here and the London one hundred years in the future been achieved? Yet that equipment in the store had not originated in 1866 by any stretch of the imagination.

That one tantalizing reference was what intrigued him.

'You mentioned static electricity,' he prompted.

'That was our last experiment,' Waterfield explained eagerly. 'Positive and negative electricity had failed, so we tried static.' The gleam left his eyes. 'Ah, if only we had understood what powers we were going to unleash.'

'What powers?' The Doctor peered into the cabinet. The dome and the rods became clear to him now. Waterfield and Maxtible had built a huge static electricity generator, to charge the mirrors. While their image business was a lot of stuff and nonsense, the use of static electricity was not.

If the right amounts of trace elements were present in the metals used for the rods and the supports, then some strange and dangerous effects might conceivably be reached using even this kind of primitive device.

'In the middle of our trial test with static, creatures burst out of our cabinet,' Waterfield replied. There were tears in his eyes now. 'They invaded the house, took away my daughter . . .' His voice trailed off at the memory.

For the first time, Maxtible showed some emotion. He wrapped a comforting arm about the scientist's shoulder.

‘Oh, my dear fellow,’ he said, soothingly. ‘My dear, dear fellow.’ He led Waterfield to one of the stools and gently urged him to sit. ‘We shall win through,’ he vowed. ‘Now that the Doctor is here to aid us.’

‘These creatures?’ the Doctor prompted. He preferred to understand what he was getting into before he committed himself to any kind of action.

Swallowing, Waterfield managed to contain his emotions and to continue with his explanations. ‘We had opened the way for them with our experiment. I am still not sure how, but this cabinet somehow overlapped one of their own fields of search. It opened a portal from their point of origin to this room. They forced me into the horror of time travel, Doctor. They had a device, far beyond my comprehension, that somehow bridged this house with the shop that lies exactly one hundred years in advance of our date. Using threats against my poor daughter as leverage, they forced me to steal a box belonging to you and thus lure you into a trap, Then I was compelled to transport you here, with your colleague Mr McCrimmon.’

Warily, the Doctor said, ‘These creatures knew me?’

‘They supplied us with likenesses,’ replied Maxtible, cheerfully puffing on his cigar. ‘A variation on the popular daguerreotype, I understand.’

‘What could I do?’ pleaded Waterfield. ‘They said that my daughter would die if I did not obey them.’

‘What are they called, these creatures?’ asked the Doctor slowly. He was already certain that he knew the answer to the question. Static electricity, time travel, the ruthless behaviour all added up to only one possible—

‘Doc-tor!’

The Doctor spun around, almost making himself giddy.

Emerging from the mirror cabinet was a Dalek. Hastily backing away from it, the Doctor almost fell across one of the benches.

‘Now do you understand?’ grated the Dalek.

‘Yes,’ the Doctor replied quietly. ‘Perfectly.’

The Dalek’s eyestick swung round to focus on Maxtible and Waterfield. ‘Move back!’ it instructed. The two men almost fell over

themselves to obey. The head swivelled so that the eye centred on the Doctor once more. ‘Our plan has worked,’ it announced. ‘We shall triumph.’ The Dalek’s gun-stick rose to cover all three of them. ‘You will obey. You will obey.’

‘Obey what?’ asked the Doctor. Though he had been expecting to discover that the Daleks were the masterminds behind the plot, he was appalled to discover his suspicions were correct. In all of his travels, he had rarely encountered any race quite so arrogant, so unfeeling and so utterly ruthless and efficient as the Daleks. The only good part about this whole thing was that the Daleks had not killed him on sight. This was an innovation in their standing orders that intrigued him. ‘What do you want?’ he asked.

‘We have your time ship,’ the Dalek replied. ‘We will destroy it unless you help us with an experiment.’

The Doctor was not at all certain that the Daleks could actually destroy the TARDIS. But all they had to do was to close down this link of theirs and they would strand him here in the nineteenth century on Earth. There was almost nothing more awful for the Doctor to contemplate than being stuck in one time and planet for the rest of his life. ‘I am to help you, am I?’ he asked. He peered at the Dalek through his heavy fringe of hair. ‘What experiment?’

‘You will help the Daleks test another human being.’

Frowning, the Doctor asked, ‘What kind of test?’

‘Do not question!’ commanded the Dalek.

‘I won’t be your slave!’ he yelled at it. ‘It doesn’t matter what you do!’

Waterfield gripped his arm tightly. ‘Doctor!’ he pleaded.

‘I beg of you – ’

‘No harm will come to any of you if you agree,’ the Dalek stated. The Doctor knew these foes much too well to believe the promise for a second. Before he could reply, the Dalek continued, ‘Where is your companion?’

‘Jamie?’ For a moment, the Doctor had managed to completely forget about the young Scot.

‘He is in the house,’ Waterfield said quickly, eager to prove his good

faith. ‘I did everything you asked me to.’

His concern for his daughter’s safety was clear in his voice.

The Doctor shrugged off Waterfield’s arm and crossed to stand directly in front of the Dalek. ‘Why did you ask about Jamie?’ he demanded.

‘He is the human being who is to be tested.’

Alarmed, the Doctor asked, ‘Why? What do you mean,

“tested”?’

‘Silence!’ The Dalek clearly felt that it had explained enough. ‘You will reveal nothing to your companion of this test. Obey the Daleks. You are in our power.’ It backed away from them and into the mirror cabinet once again.

The door closed behind it. There was a soft hum of power building up.

Turning to face Maxtible and Waterfield, the Doctor yelled, ‘What have you done with your infernal meddling?’

Before they could answer, he swung about and marched over to the cabinet. He jerked open the door, ready to start yelling at the Dalek once again.

There was no sign of it within. It had clearly departed the way it had arrived.

‘What is this test?’ he demanded. ‘Do either of you know?’

Waterfield shook his head sadly. ‘No.’

There was a pause as Maxtible took another puff on his cigar. ‘I believe I do,’ he offered. As both of his companions stared at him, Maxtible rose to his feet and began pacing back and forth between the laboratory benches. ‘I have had a few conversations with them. The Daleks, I mean. They tell me that they have always been defeated by human beings.’

‘In the long run, yes.’ The Doctor didn’t like to think how long that took sometimes. The Daleks had caused terrible death, pain and suffering even when they were defeated. Some of the victories he had witnessed against the Daleks had involved the most appalling loss of life and, in some cases, even entire worlds.

‘They say it is because human beings possess some factor that is not present in Daleks.’

The Doctor considered this point. The Daleks had only one driving ambition: to become the single, dominant species in the universe. Any other species allowed to survive their purges would be forced to become the complete slaves of the Daleks. Humans, on the other hand, for all of their failings, possessed many noble attributes; determination, courage, self-sacrifice, love, compassion; every one of which was totally alien to the Dalek creatures.

‘That is possible,’ he admitted.

Maxtible nodded. ‘They want to identify this factor, isolate and study it.’

‘To what end?’

Shrugging, Maxtible took another draught on his cigar.

‘To transplant it into their own race, I imagine.’

The Doctor didn’t need to protest this thought: Waterfield grasped the implications immediately. ‘But if they do that .. he said, appalled. ‘They are without feeling, without compassion, without mercy. If they ally this human factor with their own alien intelligence then they will become invincible. Maxtible, you should have – ’

‘My dear fellow,’ protested the financier, ‘I am merely surmising. I know nothing definite.’ The Doctor favoured him with a dark glower, clearly not impressed with his attitude. ‘Besides,’ Maxtible added, ‘what could we have done about it, even if we had known for certain? There was, and indeed there still is, the fact that they hold your daughter, Victoria, hostage against our co-operation.’

This reminder was too much for the frail scientist. He turned his face away, unable to reply.

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor softly. He felt a great deal of sympathy for the unfortunate man. ‘And now the subject of their tests is Jamie.’

11

The Kidnapping

In the sitting room, Mollie was fussing about the sleeping Jamie. She

had fetched a travelling rug that was used for the brougham and had wrapped it about his legs. It was quite a mild day, but how these Scottish gentlemen kept from freezing their knees off she couldn't say. Not a sensible garment, really – and far too immodest!

As she was tucking the rug securely about him, Jamie's eyes fluttered, and he groaned. Mollie pulled back guiltily.

'There, sir, I am sorry,' she apologized. 'I didn't mean to wake you up.'

Opening his eyes fully, Jamie wondered if he had actually woken up. He tried to sit up, in order to get a better view of the sumptuous room he was in and the cheerful maid who hovered solicitously over him. His head swam, and he sank back with a louder groan. Mollie giggled at this. Jamie managed to open one eye and attempted to glare sternly at her.

'It's not funny,' he complained. He felt like he had been partying for a week and left his brain somewhere in a Glasgow slum, where it was being stomped on by a party of hooligans on the rampage.

Trying to keep a straight face, Mollie poured out a glass of the tonic for him. 'The master left this for you to drink,'

she informed him. She held out the slightly frothy glass.

'There you are, sir. That'll clear away the cobwebs.' She gave him a broad wink as she offered him the drink.

Jamie accepted the glass and tasted it. It was not at all bad. The idea of poison or drugs crossed his mind, but he dismissed it. This cheerful maid was not likely to harm him. Quite the contrary, she seemed fairly taken by him.

Deciding he had better get a little information, he asked her, 'Where's the Doctor?' His voice reverberated around in his skull. Moaning again, he placed down the glass on the side table and clutched his head.

Mollie clucked sympathetically. 'He went off with the master and Mr Waterfield.'

'Waterfield?' That was odd. Jamie had assumed that some-how the Doctor had performed one of his miraculous escapes and saved them both. But that was clearly not the case: Water-field was the man who had lured them to the store and stolen the TARDIS. What was going

on? This was definitely the most unusual prison he'd even been in and, thanks to the Doctor, he'd been in a few, although most of them didn't provide comfy chairs and maid service.

The door at the end of the room opened and another young woman walked in. She stopped and stared at the maid, who curtsied deeply. 'Mollie, what are you doing here?' she asked, coldly. Jamie stared at her: she was obviously a woman with money as her dress was richly cut, with green silk and lace trimmings. Her short, dark hair was elegantly styled. Her pert, pretty face was flawless. She had the bearing of an aristocrat, with careful movements as she crossed the room.

'Just seeing to the young gentleman, miss,' explained the maid.

'Go and bring us some tea,' the young woman ordered.

'Well, go on.'

Mollie curtsied again and hurried from the room. The girl turned to study Jamie with her intelligent eyes.

Feeling rather self-conscious, Jamie attempted to rise. He was still very weak, and he grabbed the arm of his chair for support, grimacing as daggers of pain shot through his head.

'Please, Mr McCrimmon!' she exlaimed. 'Do be seated.

You're really not well enough yet to move about.'

Flashing her a grateful smile, Jamie collapsed back into the chair. As soon as the yellow flashes in his eyes faded away, he looked up at the young woman again. 'You know my name,' he observed.

'My father told me that you and your friend arrived late last night with Mr Waterfield.'

'Your father?' Jamie scowled. 'I'm sorry, but I seem to be having difficulty remembering anything.'

With a laugh, the girl swept over to join him. 'My father owns this house,' she explained. 'I'm his daughter, Ruth Maxtible.'

'How do you do?' Jamie said politely. He sipped at the glass Mollie had left, and felt a little better. 'Have you seen the Doctor this morning?'

‘Not personally,’ Ruth replied. ‘But I understand that he and my father are talking. He’ll be along presently.’ She gave him another of her dazzling smiles. ‘Do you have everything you need?’

Not really, Jamie thought. But he doubted that asking about the TARDIS would get him anywhere quite just yet.

He held up the glass he was sipping. ‘I don’t know what this is, but it works all right. I’m beginning to feel much better.’

‘It’s one of my father’s little potions,’ Ruth informed him. ‘I understand it is rather effective after a night on the town, Mr McCrimrnon.’

‘Aye?’ Jamie wished he had the recipe for when he did have a night on the town. ‘Aye,’ he agreed, ‘it is doing me good.’

‘Mollie shall bring you tea in a minute,’ Ruth promised.

‘I’m obliged to you,’ said Jamie. Ruth inclined her head slightly, then turned to leave. Jamie’s eyes followed her, then focused on the picture above the mantel. He was strangely drawn to the innocent face in the portrait. ‘Miss Maxtible?’ he called.

Ruth paused and turned. ‘Yes?’

He gestured at the painting. ‘Can you tell me who that is in the portrait?’ he asked, puzzled. ‘The young lady?’ He had the oddest feeling that somehow he knew the woman, yet he also knew this was the first time he had ever laid eyes on the picture. There was something gentle and trusting about her face.

Ruth glanced up at the picture. Jamie could not see her features from where he sat, and so missed completely the look of venom that Ruth gave the portrait. The terrible, cold sneer was gone when she turned back to him. ‘The portrait is of Mr Waterfield’s late wife,’ she replied, sweetly.

Disappointed, Jamie stared at the painting again. ‘She was very beautiful,’ he commented.

‘Yes,’ agreed Ruth evenly. ‘And his daughter looks very like her.’ She regarded him with concern. ‘You are quite comfortable?’

‘I am,’ Jamie assured her. ‘Thank you. You’re very kind.’

Ruth smiled again and then left the room, closing the door gently behind her.

Jamie drained the glass he held slowly; allowing the potion to do its work. It really was quite amazing. The pounding in his head had died down, and the strength was returning to his limbs. Setting the glass down, he threw off the blanket and rose gingerly to his feet. He used the chair as support for a moment, then took a deep breath. When the room stayed still, he walked to the door and tested it.

Unlocked. Then he was not exactly a prisoner. On the other hand, where could he go until he knew where he was and what was happening?

Glancing about the room he saw little that would help him to get any ideas. The place looked a little old-fashioned compared to the twentieth century, but he couldn't really be sure of anything. His eyes fell on a small desk in the corner of the room. It was the kind with a lid to open. Maybe there would be a calendar there, or something. He strode across to it and lifted the top. Inside he saw a couple of opened letters tucked carefully into a small cubbyhole in the desk.

Intent on this, he did not see that the french windows behind him were opened silently by a large, muscular man.

The stranger had the look of a person who worked with his hands. His rough trousers were slightly stained, and he was in his shirt-sleeves. His heavily muscled arms were covered in wiry hair, His face was grim, and his dark hair untidy.

Closing the door just as silently as he had opened it, he slid into a waiting position behind one of the heavy curtains.

Jamie stared at the letter he had extracted from the desk.

The envelope bore a black stamp with some woman's face on it. It was addressed to T Maxtible, Esq, at Maxtible House, nr Canterbury. It seemed an incomplete address to Jamie, but maybe this Maxtible was well known enough here for it to suffice. He opened the letter and whistled softly to himself. 'May, 1866,' he muttered. 'So that's what Waterfield's done.' His suspicions were correct. Waterfield had some sort of time machine like the Doctor's, and he had used it to bring the Doctor and Jamie back a hundred years. It was obviously the machine he had used to stock his shop with those genuine antiques. The rogue was running some sort of smuggling business across time.

Jamie could almost admire the man's audacity, except what use did Waterfield have for himself and the Doctor?

There was a gentle knock on the door. Hastily, Jamie replaced the letter and closed the bureau. He did not want to look like he'd been prying, or give away that he was well enough yet to move around. If he played the invalid for a while, maybe he would catch their strange captors or their guards. The Doctor must have some plan of his own going

– he always did – but until he knew what it was, Jamie decided he had better be prepared for action. Hurrying back to the chair, he stooped to pick up the lap-rug he had discarded.

The hidden intruder seized his chance. As Jamie's back was to him, the man stepped out from behind the curtains.

From his deep pocket he had pulled a cosh. With considerable force and expertise, he slammed the weapon down across Jamie's peck. The young Scot gave barely a groan. The intruder grab-bed him, easing Jamie back into the chair as if he were sleeping. Then he grabbed the discarded rug and vanished back behind the curtain.

The door opened finally, and Mollie backed into the room carrying a tray of tea things. She had waited outside politely long enough, and there had been no response.

Seeing Jamie in the chair, she shook her head slightly.

Dropped off again, most likely, the poor thing. She placed the tray on the table by the couch. 'Here we are, then, sir,'

she said brightly.

There was no response at all from the young guest. Still unsure of what to do, Mollie bent to the tray and picked up a china teacup. Miss Ruth had been clear that she was to serve tea to the gentleman. 'I've been as quick as I could,'

Mollie apologized. 'Shall I pour for you, sir?'

When there was still no reply, Mollie poured out a cup of tea. She took the steaming brew and the milk jug and set them on the small table beside Jamie. Close up, she could see that Jamie was definitely unconscious, breathing shallowly. 'Poor young gentleman,' she muttered to herself.

‘They shouldn’t have made you drink so much last night.

It isn’t good for you, you know.’

She started to turn to leave the room. There was a faint sound behind her. Thinking that Jamie was waking, she started to turn. Then a strong arm wrapped about her, and a hand clasped her mouth to prevent her from screaming out. Terrified, Mollie began to struggle, as her unseen assailant slowly started to throttle her.

‘I do beg you to reconsider, Doctor.’ Waterfield gazed in entreaty at his companion.

One hand on the handle to the sitting room door, the Doctor paused and shook his head. ‘I’ve made up my mind,’ he replied.

‘But they ordered you not to tell Mr McCrimmon anything.’

‘I’m aware of that,’ the Doctor said. ‘But do you think I can dare ask him to run headlong into danger without telling him anything at all?’ He shook his head firmly. ‘I won’t do it.’

Scared of what might happen to his daughter, the scientist gripped the Doctor’s ann. ‘But Doctor, your young friend is vital to the plan of these creatures – these Daleks. Suppose when you tell him of the dangers he faces that he then refuses to do what they want? What will become of Victoria then?’

‘Jamie has a right to know and decide for himself,’ the Doctor insisted. ‘Then we shall see what his reply will be.’

He shook himself free of Waterfield’s grip and opened the sitting room door. He strode inside, followed by the agonized Waterfield. Glancing at the chair where he’d last seen Jamie, the Doctor saw a rug-covered figure. Only one shoe and a little tousled dark hair was visible. ‘Still asleep,’

he muttered. ‘The gas in that box of yours was pretty potent.’

‘It was Maxtible’s invention,’ Waterfield replied. ‘It—’

He broke off, puzzled, as the Doctor gave a cry and dashed towards the chair.

Having caught a glimpse of the black woman’s shoe protruding from under the rug, the Doctor had realized that there was something

amiss. Tearing away the blanket, he stared down at Mollie. She was unconscious, with red marks about her neck where someone had cut off her air until she had collapsed.

'Mollie!' exclaimed Waterfield, appalled.

The Doctor took her pulse and lifted an eyelid. 'She'll be all right,' he announced gruffly. 'But what has happened to Jamie?' He stared at Waterfield, and saw his own fears echoed in the scientist's haunted eyes.

Inside Maxtible's workshop, the grizzled financier was pacing up and down, gesturing wildly with his inevitable cigar. 'It's a temporary set-back, nothing more,' he assured the Dalek that stood by the mirror cabinet. 'I know that the Doctor is balking, but he will come around, I promise.'

'Order the Doctor to begin the test,' the Dalek interrupted him. It had no interest in excuses or explanations.

'But I shall first have to explain to him what he has to do,' protested Maxtible.

It was the wrong thing to say. The Dalek's gun rose slightly but significantly. 'Go now,' it grated. 'Obey the Daleks.'

Maxtible stared at the barrel of the weapon and then nodded curtly. Spinning around, he hurried from the room.

The Dalek turned back to the cabinet. It was time for the experiment to begin.

Inside the sitting room, Waterfield hovered over the Doctor, wringing his hands together nervously. 'Your friend is vital to these creatures, Doctor,' he said.

'Absolutely essential,'

On his hands and knees, the Doctor was scuffling about on the carpet beside the french windows. He looked like a large and very unkept dog. If it had been a lighter moment, one might almost have expected him to start scratching for fleas. Peering closely at a slight stain in the pattern of the carpet, the Doctor said, 'So it seems. Then who could have kidnapped him?'

'Why won't you understand?' begged Waterfield. He couldn't fathom

what the Doctor was up to at a time like this. ‘The threats these Daleks make are not idle ones.

Kennedy was murdered by these creatures.’ He gave a deep, soul-wrenching sigh. ‘Without your friend, our only hope is gone.’ The Doctor did not reply. Instead he used the edge of a card from his pocket to scrape up some of the dirt he had found and sniffed at it. Waterfield stared at him. Was it possible that this odd little man had something in mind after all? ‘Unless you know something?’ he asked. ‘You seem to be well acquainted with these creatures.’

If he was hoping for assurances, he was badly disappointed. The Doctor scrambled to his feet, the card still in his hand. He gave the scientist a very bleak look.

‘And everything you say, Waterfield, is true. Unless we can find Jamie, the Daleks will take pleasure in killing anyone in sight. And their greatest pleasure of all would be to kill me.’

A second Dalek emerged from the mirrored cabinet.

Unlike the first, which was a dull metallic grey, this new arrival was mostly red. An emissary of the Supreme Council, the Red Dalek was in command of the operations on Earth in this time zone. It was not necessary for him to be there, but a field check was certainly in order. ‘Report,’

it instructed.

The grey Dalek swung about. ‘The humans have been told to begin the test,’ it replied.

‘Any delay will result in death,’ the Red Dalek stated.

‘There will be no delay.’

The Red Dalek considered for a moment. ‘Acceptable,’

he decided. Spinning about, he re-entered the time device.

With the Dalek plan moving into the next phase, the Council must be informed of progress.

Soon, very soon, they would have the information that they would need to place the entire Universe in their grasp.

Maxtible stared at Waterfield in horror. ‘Kidnapped?’ he repeated. ‘But if Mr McCrimmon has been kidnapped, it will be the end of us. The Daleks have issued orders that the test must commence, and they will never agree to delay.’ For once he seemed to have forgotten about his cigar, which had burnt itself out. ‘These creatures will kill us all.’

‘Unless we can find him quickly,’ Waterfield replied. He stared down at the Doctor, knowing the eccentric traveller was their only hope now. Sadly, the Doctor did not appear to be in complete command of his faculties. He was still rooting around on the carpet, examining dirt.

‘Straw,’ he said firmly.

Frowning slightly, Waterfield blinked hard. ‘I beg your pardon?’

‘A piece of straw.’ The Doctor rose from his knees and held out a tiny piece of crushed straw. ‘It’s all we have to clutch at.’

‘I must confess,’ Maxtible said slowly, as if he were talking to a child, ‘that I don’t quite follow you, my good sir. Are you waxing poetical?’

The Doctor sighed. ‘It’s a good twenty years too early for Sherlock Holmes, I know, but haven’t either of you read Edgar Allen Poe?’

Waterfield shook his head. ‘I read only textbooks,’ he confessed.

‘And I the financial papers,’ growled Maxtible. ‘What does some American ghost story writer have to do with anything? Aside from the fact that we are in a situation even he could barely imagine?’

‘Deductive reasoning,’ the Doctor replied. ‘Poe created the first true literary detective.’ Seeing their blank faces, he was tempted to yell, but he needed their help. ‘All right.

Now, would you say that Mollie is a good maid?

Conscientious? Clean?’

‘Why, yes,’ agreed Maxtible. ‘She is an excellent servant.’

‘Quite.’ The Doctor pointed to the muddy tracks. ‘And wouldn’t she have cleaned those up the moment that she saw them? That she didn’t clean them up means she was attacked before she could. Hence they were made by whoever assaulted her, and clearly the same person who took Jamie from the room. This straw was embedded in the mud,

and must have come from the shoe of our unknown kidnapper. Now, are there stables in your grounds, Maxtible?'

Inside the stables, Jamie groaned and blinked. His head was really hurting this time, and he was having great difficulty remembering what had happened to him.

Something about a drug, and the Doctor, and a very pretty young girl's face, but it was all muddled in his mind.

Something prodded him hard in the ribs. 'Had a cozy little sleep have you, young swell?' asked a resonant, aggressive voice. Before Jamie could make any sense of this, he was poked roughly again. He swatted at his tormenter.

'Lively, is it?' the man growled. 'Maybe you'd like to sleep again?' Jamie finally managed to focus his eyes on the rough-looking lout who menaced him. He was seated on an upturned bucket beside Jamie, a heavy cudgel in his hand.

It was with this that he had been poking the Scot. 'I've got Mr Nod here,' the man said. 'He'll have you snoring as good as ever.'

Jamie glanced around. He had guessed from the smell and feel of the hay that he was in a stable. His eyes confirmed the fact. From the look of the tackle on the walls, the brushes and blankets stacked neatly by the stall and the filled bin of feed, the place was in use. There were no horses in the brick and wood structure at the moment, and the only person in sight was the thug menacing him.

'What do you want?' asked Jamie.

'What do we all want, laddie-buck?' asked the man, grinning slightly. 'Money.'

'You're out of luck, then,' Jamie informed him. 'I don't have any.'

'I know that.' Another flash of ill-shaped teeth. 'But I'm to be well paid for what I'm doing, have no fear of that.'

'Paid for what?' asked Jamie. If he could stall this ruffian until his head stopped splitting, maybe he could make their next match a fair fight. 'I don't know you.'

'No reason you should,' the thug said. Then he held up a hand as there was the sound of footsteps from outside.

Rising to his feet, he kept one eye on Jamie and the other on the half-open stable door.

The top half of the door swung open, allowing in a shaft of sunlight. In the gap, Jamie made out another stranger.

This man was in his mid-twenties and of a very different cut from the thug hovering close by. His suit was expensive, and he wore a sparkling white shirt with a neat black bow-tie. His hair was trimmed and slicked back.

Overall, he looked like a department store mannequin. He turned curiously pale, watery blue eyes on them.

The rough man relaxed slightly when he saw who it was.

'Here's your man, sir,' he said, gesturing at Jamie with the cudgel.

'Toby!' the gentleman exclaimed, as if seeing him for the first time. 'What in Hades have you done?'

The thug's face creased into a startled frown. 'Done?

Brought him from the house, just as you said.'

The newcomer stared at him in horror. 'I said nothing of the kind.'

'But you did!' Toby's face underwent a number of startling transformations, from surprise through disbelief to suspicion. 'You did, sir, honest! A guinea you promised me.' His eyes narrowed and he raised his stick in annoyance. 'I've done as you told me. You don't get out of paying!'

Swinging open the bottom half of the stable door, the gentleman strode imperiously into the stable. He gripped Toby's lapels, swung the startled man around and gave him a push in the direction of the exit. 'Be careful how you speak to me, Toby,' he said warningly. Fishing in his waistcoat pocket, he pulled a small gold piece out and tossed it into the mud at the thug's feet. 'If it's money you want, take that and get out.'

With a surly scowl on his face, Toby snatched up the coin and hurried out of the stable, casting a last, uncomprehending look over his shoulder as he hurried away.

Jamie clambered to his feet, staring at his unlikely rescuer – or was

he? That business with Toby was very odd, to say the least. Then the well-dressed man seemed to go limp. He leaned against the wall, sighing deeply, and pinched at his nose, his eyes screwed tightly shut. He shuddered violently, and then seemed to regain his lost strength. Pushing himself from the wall, he straightened up. His eyes snapped open and he stared directly at Jamie.

'Where is Toby?' he demanded.

This was getting to be too much for the young Scot.

'You just sent him about his business. What's the matter with you?' Was it possible that this young lad wasn't quite right in the head? He had heard that the English aristocracy was filled with all kinds of congenital morons and worse. 'Are you feeling all right?'

The young man brushed off the inquiry. 'Where is Victoria Waterfield?' he asked.

Jamie shrugged. 'I don't know.' That fetching young lass in the picture? No, that was her mother, wasn't it?

Ruth had mentioned that, but said that Victoria was the image of her mother.

'Yes, you do.'

'I tell you I don't even know her,' Jamie snapped back.

The other man frowned slightly, as if trying to make sense of matters. 'You're in the house,' he said. 'A friend of Maxtible's. You must know.'

'And I'm telling you – ' Jamie began, but he stopped as the gentleman gave a terrible groan and fell back against the wall once more. He rubbed at his neck as if in some terrible pain. Jamie did not see the flash of metal exposed as the man fingered the skin below his collar.

Then the man straightened up again and turned back to face Jamie, his face blank and composed. There was no sign of any hurt in his eyes. 'I must apologize for that villain, Toby,' he said, as if they had not already spoken to one another. 'He was telling lies, of course.'

Unable to follow what was happening in this most peculiar young man, Jamie simply stared at him in disbelief.

'I shall escort you back to the house,' the young man offered.

‘You asked me about Victoria Waterfield,’ Jamie said, trying to decide if the man was a lunatic having seizures.

‘But she is in Paris,’ the other replied, as if that was obvious. ‘I fear I have not introduced myself. Arthur Terrall.’ He gave a slight bow.

‘Look, never mind all that,’ Jamie snapped. ‘Did you ask that other man to knock me out and bring me here or didn’t you?’

Terrall stared at Jamie as if he’d suddenly brayed like a horse. ‘I?’ he asked incredulously. ‘ I did no such thing.’

Before Jamie could ask any further questions, the Doctor suddenly stepped into the stable. Jamie had not seen him outside the doorway. ‘Doctor!’ he exclaimed, relieved.

Terrall inclined his head towards the newcomer slightly. ‘I see you are in good hands now,’ he said to Jamie. ‘I won’t detain you any further.’ As he moved to the door, he nodded. ‘Good day, Doctor.’

The Doctor wiggled a couple of fingers in his direction, impatiently tapping his feet on the cobbles until Terrall was out of earshot. Jamie was not so restrained.

‘He’s mad!’ the Scot exploded. ‘Stark staring mad!’

‘Yes, I was listening,’ the Doctor admitted. He had been hoping to hear something of use that might explain the reason for Jamie’s abduction. On that matter, he had not made much progress. ‘Let’s have a look at the head of yours.’

‘Och, it’s all right,’ Jamie protested. The Doctor ignored him and examined the swollen lump on his neck. ‘One minute he says this, then the next minute he says that.’

‘You’ve a thick skull, luckily,’ the Doctor said brusquely. ‘You’ll do.’

‘Look, can you make it out?’ Jamie appealed to him.

‘I’m knocked over the head and brought here. The man who did it – Toby – claims Terrall promised to pay him.

Then this Terrall himself arrives and denies having ordered Toby to do it. Then he pays the man anyway. The next second, he asks me where Victoria Waterfield is. And a minute later, he’s telling me that he’s known all along she’s in Paris! I can’t follow any of it. Can you help

me?'

'I can help a little bit,' the Doctor admitted. 'I know what's happened to Victoria.'

'Is she in Paris, then?'

'No, I'm afraid not.' The Doctor looked at him gravely.

'She's a prisoner of the Daleks.'

'The Daleks!' Jamie stared back, perplexed. 'I've heard you talk about them enough, Doctor. Nasty wee creatures, you always said.'

'Very nasty,' the Doctor agreed.

'But what are they doing here? Are they the ones that Waterfield stole the TARDIS for, then?'

'That's right.'

'Then we've got to help her!' Jamie was ready to start back to the house and tear the place apart. The Doctor grabbed his arm.

'I'm afraid we can't do that, Jamie,' he said. 'There are more important matters to consider.'

Jamie glared at the Doctor in annoyance. 'You can't mean we have to leave that poor, innocent girl in the power of the Daleks.'

'Don't be so melodramatic,' the Doctor replied curtly.

'You don't even know the young lady. You've been reading too much Walter Scott.' He gave a strained smile. 'Jamie, trust me, please. We have to be very careful indeed. One false move and the Daleks might destroy the TARDIS.

Then what would become of us?'

'What will become of Victoria if we don't help her?'

demanded Jamie.

'She cannot be our primary concern,' the Doctor insisted. 'Jamie, please, trust me on this.'

'I'd like to, Doctor,' said Jamie slowly. 'I'd like to.' It was clear from

the look in his eyes, though, that he was having grave difficulty doing so.

Victoria sat on the edge of her small bed, her fingers moving almost automatically to gather her few possessions together. A brush and comb, a small mirror, the few toiletries the Daleks had allowed her to keep; just fragments from the life she had once led. One by one she placed the items onto a hand-towel so that she would be able to carry them. With a deep sigh, she wondered what was to become of her.

'Hurry,' grated the Dalek in the doorway of her tiny cell.

'But why am I being moved'?' she asked. All the fear had drained from her, leaving only an ache in her soul. She did not for one moment consider it likely, but she had to ask, 'Are you taking me back to my father?'

'No,' the Dalek answered. 'You are being moved.'

That told her nothing. Knotting the ends of the towel together, Victoria grasped her small bundle and slowly stood up. It hardly mattered what happened to her any more. Nothing, not even execution, could be worse than the nightmare she had already been through at the instigation of these evil creatures. She only wished that she could see her father again. He must be so desperately worried about her.

He was such a dear man, and so totally out of his depth at times. Since her mother had died, Victoria had been the woman of the house. She had reminded her father to eat and to wash and change his shirt. His eagerness to be back at his experiments, his intensity when working, the joyful light in his eyes whenever one of his theories proved correct all brought happiness to Victoria's heart. And when Mr Maxtible had offered to fund her father's work and to allow them to stay at this country manor of his, Victoria had imagined all manner of grand possibilities.

At the first it had been so wonderful. Mr Maxtible was a great teller of tales, and had travelled the world. Each item he owned had a story behind it that he had delighted in explaining. And there had been parties – Ruth had seen to that. Having another girl her own age about the house had been all the excuse she had needed. Those first few months had been wonderful.

'Pick up your cover!' the Dalek ordered, jerking her back to the terrible reality of her new status. Victoria obeyed, picking up the

rough blanket from her bed.

Folding it across her arm, she gripped her small bundle in her right hand. ‘Follow,’ the Dalek instructed. It spun about and glided out of the room.

Victoria followed it outside into the narrow corridor.

This was as far as she had been allowed to go in the past.

The door opposite was for the small washroom she was escorted to and from twice a day. This had been her world for weeks now. The Dalek turned to the left, then spun its eyestick back to regard her.

‘Do not be afraid,’ it ordered. ‘You are not to be exterminated.’

That was a small concession at least; if she could believe this creature. Still, the Daleks had never lied to her in the past. They had no need to lie. A second Dalek glided up, falling in behind her. They were not going to kill her, but they were taking no chances on her making an escape.

‘Move,’ the new Dalek told her.

She started off down the corridor. This was the south wing, which Maxtible had been intending to have refurbished. There were no carpets and no furniture in the corridor. The walls were bare, and there were no lights.

Sunlight illuminated the corridor from the infrequent windows. As she passed one, Victoria could not resist stopping to stare outside.

They were on the second floor of the house. She could see out across the tops of the trees in the garden. Beyond them, she knew, was the meandering stream where Ruth had taken her riding, and where they had held happy picnics. Birds fluttered about the branches, chirping and whistling cheerfully. They could afford to be cheery; they were free.

‘Do not delay,’ the Dalek behind her commanded.

Tearing her gaze away from the freedom that was out of her reach, Victoria plodded forward. She was a prisoner of the Daleks. There was no hope of freedom for her. The nightmare would continue as long as she lived. There was no one who could help her. No one.

13

A Trial of Strength

In the sitting room, the Doctor was attempting to reassure Waterfield. The scientist was standing beneath the portrait of his wife, staring at it. He seemed to be transfixed by it.

The Doctor could understand why: the unknown artist who had done the work had captured a rare vitality in the paints. And, of course, the portrait had a great deal of meaning for Waterfield. It reminded him of his dead wife, and his abducted daughter.

The painting seemed to have affected Jamie, too. Now that the Doctor had spoken with Jamie he knew that the young man had somehow been drawn to Victoria through that picture. Interesting, but was that accidental or part of the Daleks' plan?

'You warned him, Doctor,' Waterfield said accusingly.

'You told him about the Daleks.'

'Of course I did,' the Doctor agreed. 'I couldn't let Jamie go into danger without understanding the true scope of his peril, could I?'

'But you were expressly told—'

'Oh, fiddlesticks!' the Doctor snapped, annoyed at last.

He could feel for Waterfield's concerns, but he was taking this whole matter much too pessimistically. Spinning around to glare at the scientist, the Doctor failed to notice Jamie slip into the room. The Scot, realizing he was unobserved, quickly hid himself behind a large Chinese screen by the door.

'Now that he knows the danger,' Waterfield said, anguished, 'what if he refuses to go along with the plan?'

'Jamie will co-operate,' the Doctor insisted. 'I assure you of that.'

'Are you certain?' asked Waterfield. He desperately wanted to believe the Doctor, but was equally afraid that his daughter was doomed.

'Certain sure.' The Doctor gave a tight smile. 'He'll do whatever he's asked to do. Now, come along. We'd better go and see Maxtible.'

Waterfield finally dragged his attention away from the portrait.

Nodding, he allowed the Doctor to lead him from the room. When they were gone, Jamie emerged from his hiding place. He glanced up at the painting of Mrs Waterfield.

What was the Doctor up to? He was plotting something with Waterfield and Maxtible, that much was certain. And they were the very scoundrels who had stolen the TARDIS

and then kidnapped the pair of them. It did not make a lot of sense to Jamie. He had been travelling with the Doctor for some time now, and had grown to admire and trust the funny little man. But he had never seen him act like this before.

For once Jamie could not bring himself to simply accept the Doctor's word. It was clear that he was either lying or keeping something from him. And he seemed to have so little regard for Victoria Waterfield. Jamie looked up at the painting again. Even if her father was a rogue, she had to be innocent in all of this. Ruth Maxtible was a pleasant young lady, and that maid, Mollie, was a regular lassie.

They did not seem to be part of the fear that the Doctor insisted pervaded the house.

And now he had claimed that his oldest foes, the Daleks, were involved, but Jamie hadn't seen any signs of them. The Doctor had shown him a book once, in the TARDIS. It had been printed some time in the future, and had odd, moving images in it. Some had been of the Daleks. Ugly, horrible machine-things. Could they be hiding here, in the house, unseen?

Or was the Doctor lying to him about their involvement in all of this? Jamie hated to suspect the Doctor of duplicity, but there was something awfully furtive in his manner and his words of late. Until he knew for sure what was going on, Jamie did not intend to blindly accept what he was told.

The Dalek in front of the mirrored cabinet spun about to look at Maxtible. It had been engaging in some kind of silent communication with its fellow creatures, Maxtible surmised. The Daleks were gifted scientists, with strange minds and many secrets that they kept to themselves. He puffed on his cigar, waiting for the Dalek to speak. It did no good asking for information, the Daleks only conversed when they wished to do so.

'The female human being has been moved,' the Dalek informed him.

So Maxtible's theory had been correct: they did have some non-verbal means of communication. There had been no audible report to that effect. 'We are all prepared,' he replied.

'The testing equipment is ready,' the Dalek said.

Maxtible nodded, regarding the new items on his work bench. 'I think you will be pleased with the man,' he informed the Dalek. 'He works for me at my London house. I have had him brought here especially.'

'Show me.' The Dalek was not impressed.

Taking the cigar from his mouth, Maxtible waved it about. 'He is, you understand, only a simple fellow. Quite dumb, I fear, but that has its advantages for us.' He chuckled at the thought. 'But his mind is, shall we say, undeveloped? He would not be able to understand you Daleks. He would be terrified.'

'Show me,' insisted the Dalek, annoyed at the delay.

Nodding, Maxtible moved towards the door. 'If you would wait out of sight?' he suggested. The Dalek did not reply, but turned and entered the mirror cabinet. The door closed silently. Maxtible couldn't help wondering if the Dalek could somehow see straight through the metal door, or whether by some arrangement of mirrors it could watch what was happening in the room beyond the cabinet. The Daleks never bothered to explain anything, of course, so he had no way of knowing.

With the Dalek hidden, Maxtible opened the door.

'Kemel!' he called out. There was a motion in the corridor outside as the giant retainer rose from the chair he had been waiting in and marched into the laboratory.

Kemel was from some place with an unpronounceable name in the Tekir Dag mountains of Turkey. Maxtible had encountered the giant on one of his tours of the farther reaches of Europe. There had been talk of his financing a rail line through the Bosphorus region, and Maxtible had wanted to see the place. His coach had broken an axle, and Kemel had appeared with the local blacksmith. To Maxtible's amazement, the giant had been able to lift the coach to allow temporary repairs to be made. Though Kemel was unable to speak, Maxtible had managed to communicate an offer of employment to the man, and the Turk had accepted. Over the course of time, he had proven to be highly useful to Maxtible in many ways. He had also learned English, though only to hear; his powers of speech had never

developed.

He was an impressive fellow, six foot six inches tall. He dressed simply in boots, loose trousers and a large white silken shirt, over which he wore a loose red waistcoat. His exposed skin was tanned deep brown, and his head was entirely bald. His eyes were so dark brown that they were almost black. His face looked rough, but there was an inner calmness about Kemel that he carried with him. He had no unfulfilled dreams or desires and simply accepted each day for what it brought him.

'Will you come with me?' Maxtible asked him, and led him across to the laboratory bench. 'I want you to stand there, Kemel,' he said, pointing with his cigar. 'That's it, facing the cabinet.' Kemel moved into the indicated position. 'Good,' said Maxtible approvingly. He picked up a solid iron bar from the worktop and held it out. 'Now, bend that.'

Taking the bar, Kemel held his hands at either end. He tested the bar briefly against his knee to size up the force he would have to employ. Then he gently placed the bar back on the bench and stripped off his waistcoat and shirt, laying them down on the wooden surface. This revealed what the loose fabric had hidden: that he was incredibly well-endowed with muscles. His arms were immense, and the tendons ran down under his skin like metal tubing.

Rough dark hair covered his powerful chest and part of his wide back. Even his neck was thicker than most men's thighs.

He picked up the bar once again, a hand at either end.

Frowning in concentration, he started to apply pressure.

His knuckles turned white and his biceps began to swell even further. The cords in his arms expanded, and he started to grimace with the strain. Thick ropes of muscle in his neck filled out, and a few beads of sweat trickled down his forehead.

Slowly the iron began to give way. Applying all of his concentration into the task, Kemel kept up the pressure.

The bar, once it started to bend, gave way quickly. In seconds Kemel's huge fists came together, the metal bowed up like an arch above them.

'Excellent, Kemel, excellent,' said Maxtible with enthusiasm. He

glanced significantly at the cabinet as he accepted the bar from Kemel and let it fall to the workbench. ‘Now, help me with these stools.’ He gestured to the laboratory stools by the bench, then picked one up and moved it into the small clear space in front of the cabinet. Kemel brought a second, and placed it about two feet from the first under Maxtible’s direction. The financier then took a length of wood from the table and laid it between the stools. It was some three feet long, six inches across and two inches thick. ‘Now,’ said Maxtible, puffing on his cigar, ‘one blow, Kemel. Break the plank.’

He stood back to give the Turk room.

Kemel’s eyes scanned along the plank, examining it and searching for the centre point. Then he moved into position, extending his right foot back. His left knee bent, lowering him down about six inches. Clenching his right fist, he raised it above his head. Then, in one brief burst of movement, he slammed his fist down onto the plank.

There was a sharp report and the wood shattered into two pieces, each of which clattered noisily to the floor.

Without any visible strain or emotion, Kemel retrieved the two pieces and laid them back on one of the stools.

‘Very good indeed, Kemel,’ said Maxtible, beaming. ‘I’m pleased with you. You may put your jacket back on.’ As Kemel turned to obey, Maxtible moved the wood to the bench, and shifted the stools. Once his shirt was on, Kemel slipped back into his waistcoat. It was clear that he did not know what the purpose of the demonstration had been, and that it didn’t really make any difference whether he was told or not.

‘Listen carefully to me, Kemel,’ Maxtible said. Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out one of the pictures of Jamie that the Daleks had given to him. ‘Do you see this man?’

The Turk bent to study the picture, then he nodded.

‘Good. Now, I shall take you from here to a place that I want you to guard. This young man will try and get past you. You are not to let him.’ Maxtible looked up into Kemel’s eyes. ‘Do you understand?’

Kemel gave a half nod, but a slight frown plucked at his brows. It was clear that he wished to understand the reasons for what he was being ordered to do. Kemel was silent, and in many ways a child, but he was not stupid.

Nor was he cruel, or blindly obedient. He would do as he was asked only if he understood what he was doing and agreed that it was necessary.

'He is an evil villain, Kemel.' It did not bother Maxtible at all to lie to the Turk. It had to be done, and Maxtible was above all a pragmatist. 'A cutthroat. A danger to us all.

He would cheerfully murder us all in our beds if he could.'

Kemel looked thoughtful. He was not yet convinced. 'You are to guard a young lady whom I believe you know. A Miss Victoria Waterfield.' Kemel smiled and nodded. The Waterfields had been to Maxtible's London house on a number of occasions. Kemel had taken a liking to Victoria, and she to him. Maxtible tapped the photograph. 'This young man was very rude to her, and she sent him away.

He has vowed to kill her in return. I have received word that he managed to escape from the jail where he rightly belongs and may even now be on his way to complete his terrible plans. That is why I called you here, so that you will be able to stop this madman should he appear. You will remember him?'

Kemel nodded vigorously. There was a glint of anger in his eyes. Maxtible had touched the right nerve with his story.

'Good.' The financier slipped the picture back into his pocket. 'Then come along with me, and I shall direct you to your station.' He led the Turk into the corridor and closed the door behind him.

The cabinet opened and the Dalek glided out. Moving to the work bench, it focused on the bent iron bar and on the shattered plank. The strength of the human specimen was indeed impressive to produce such an effect. Its eyestick swung about to stare at the door.

The plan was working well.

Maxtible led the silent Kemel up a flight of stairs, and then down a short corridor. Reaching a dark alcove, the financier halted. 'Wait here,' he instructed. Kemel stood impassively where he had stopped while Maxtible went a little further down the corridor. There was a small table there, and on it a candlestick. Maxtible collected the candle and returned to the waiting Turk. Using the end of his cigar, Maxtible lit the wick and held the candle out.

The alcove was only a foot or so deep, ending in a dark wooden panel.

About it was a carved frame with trefoil patterning. Despite the bright daylight in the corridor and the flickering light of the candle, the alcove appeared dark and depressing.

'This is the entrance to the south wing of my house, Kemel,' Maxtible explained. 'It's been closed off for some time now. Through this way will come the man whose picture I showed you.' Kemel nodded once to show he understood. Maxtible reached out to part of the carving.

'The door itself is a protection.' He pressed one of the leaves and there was a soft click. The wooden panel swung silently open to reveal a further section of corridor barely visible through the gap.

Kemel took a step towards the doorway, aiming to lead the way into the wing. Maxtible held up a hand. 'Wait,' he commanded.

A second later, there was a blur of metal stabbing across the opening from left to right. A thick metal spike quivered in place. Kemel jumped back, startled. Maxtible chuckled slightly, then pressed another of the carved leaves. The spike slowly withdrew into the left wall.

'This door alone may deal with the young villain,'

Maxtible said. 'But should he somehow get through here, then you must deal with him. In you go.'

Kemel stepped through the doorway without hesitation.

As soon as he had passed through, Maxtible touched the first leaf again. The hidden mechanism closed the doorway and reset the trap. The financier examined the alcove with satisfaction, then blew out the candle. He walked slowly back to the table in the corridor and replaced it.

Perfect. Everything was now ready for the Daleks' test to commence. The traps were in place, and all that remained was to convince Jamie to undertake the rescue of Victoria Water-field. Maxtible nodded to himself in satisfaction. It was a good job that the Doctor didn't know of these little frills. He might have balked even more had he known how little chance his young companion had of surviving the Daleks' test.

14

Friction

The Doctor stared at the mirror cabinet thoughtfully from his perch on one of the laboratory stools. He was itching to get a good look inside the device. It was clearly the Daleks'

lifeline to this time and place. He had considered sabotaging the apparatus somehow, and thus breaking the link for the Daleks, but had decided against it. Though it would certainly free the house and the poor unfortunates here from the evil machinations of the Daleks, it would not help in the long run. The Daleks had some scheme at work which involved himself somehow. If he cut them off here and now, they would simply look for another opportunity to find him and use him. And the next time they might decide to annihilate even more innocent souls to persuade him to co-operate.

Anyway, there was the TARDIS to think about. It was nowhere in or about the house. Had it been, he would have been watched at all times and probably confined to a small portion of the building. As his trip to look for Jamie had proved, the Daleks clearly did not expect him to either escape of find the TARDIS. Ergo, it had probably been taken through this cabinet to – where? If he knew where the Daleks were coming from, he might have some idea what lay beyond this room.

The Daleks were long-versed in time manipulation. He had been chased through the avenues of time and space by their time capsules twice in his past, and they had attempted to use their time destructor to conquer the Galaxy. Both devices had been powered by taranium, one of the rarest substances in the universe. The Doctor had managed to stop them and destroy their meagre supplies of taranium, effectively isolating them from time travel. It was clear, though, that the Daleks had discovered some other method to manipulate time. They were brilliant, he had to grant them that. This new form of time travel, though, was obviously very limited. Unlike their capsules which could traverse the vortex that underlay all of reality, this new device appeared to operate on a fixed setting.

They had stumbled onto the foolish experiments of Maxtible and Waterfield and used them to establish a link with this time and place. Then, using this house and year as a base, they had utilized the machinery he had been examining in 1966 to punch a hole in time forward a century and a few dozen miles.

But where were they coming from? And when? Was this a small pocket of Daleks operating independently? Or could there be a whole army of the creatures waiting at the end of their time tunnel to invade

the Earth?

So many questions, and so far too few answers.

As the Doctor brooded about the cabinet, the door opened. A Dalek glided out and stopped, staring in his direction. ‘What are you doing?’ it demanded.

‘Waiting for further instructions,’ he replied. ‘Isn’t that what I’m supposed to do?’

Waterfield had been hovering nervously in the background. Now he grasped the Doctor’s arm. ‘Please, Doctor,’ he begged. ‘Do not try to provoke them.’

‘Provoke them?’ echoed the Doctor, as if the idea had never crossed his mind. ‘My goodness, I’ve agreed to help them, haven’t I?’

The Dalek was clearly not fooled. ‘We do not trust you,’

it grated.

‘Well, that makes us even, doesn’t it?’ the Doctor replied.

The Dalek moved further into the room, its eyestick swivelling to continue monitoring the Doctor. ‘But we have your time machine,’ it said.

‘Yes.’

‘So you will obey us,’ the Dalek concluded.

The Doctor’s eyes narrowed. ‘To find the human factor,’

he said, softly. ‘Is that right?’

‘That is what they want,’ Waterfield broke in, nervously wringing his hands.

‘Very complex,’ the Doctor said thoughfully, watching the Dalek carefully. He scratched at the side of his nose.

‘And you propose to introduce the human factor into the race of Daleks?’

‘Yes,’ the Dalek replied. It seemed to be rather agitated, rocking back and forth in one spot. ‘The conquest of humanity has eluded us. The

Daleks must know why.'

Interesting. This Dalek seemed almost chatty. It was actually bothering to explain. The Doctor decided to press his luck a bit further. While the Daleks did not always tell the truth, they did not bother to lie without a good reason.

Anything this one might let slip would be grist for the mills of mental activity. 'But why pick on Jamie for your trial?'

'His travelling with you makes him unique,' the Dalek responded.

Now what could that mean? the Doctor wondered. 'Yes, but why him?' he asked. 'Why don't you use me in your tests instead?'

'Request denied,' the Dalek said promptly.

'Why?'

'You have travelled too much through time,' the Dalek responded. 'And you are more than human. You have the ability to alter your appearance when a human being would die. Your responses would not be of use to us. We seek the human factor.'

The door to the cabinet opened once again. This time there were three large cases inside it, mounted on a thin metallic platform. Each case was about five feet tall and four feet wide and deep. The Dalek spun about and moved towards them. There was a small control panel at the front of the platform, and the Dalek inserted its manipulator into a depression. There was an electronic whirr, and the Dalek backed away, pulling the platform from the cabinet.

It was floating freely about three inches from the floor.

Once the cases were clear of the cabinet, the door closed.

The Dalek's arm twisted slowly and the platform settled soundlessly to the floor.

'What have we here?' asked the Doctor with interest.

The door to the laboratory was now ajar, and the Maxtible stood in the entrance. 'They have been brought here from the Dalek planet,' he said.

'Skaro?' asked the Doctor.

‘Yes,’ agreed the Dalek.

Now that was very interesting. So this tunnel was connected to the Dalek home-world itself. That confirmed the Doctor’s worst fears. If Skaro lay at the other end of the tunnel, then the Daleks operating in this time period had virtually unlimited access to Dalek technology, and an unlimited supply of reinforcements. If the Daleks were to use this tunnel to invade the Earth in this time period, the consequences were appalling to consider. The human race in 1866 had absolutely no chance of resisting. They could be wiped out, thus rewriting the entire course of future history. And though it was clear that the tunnel was very limited in capacity, the Daleks could have taken over this house and amassed a large enough invasion force to strike with. So why hadn’t they done that?

Maxtible moved to the closest packing case. The lid was hinged, and he lifted it up. Standing on tiptoe, the Doctor peered within. It contained a Dalek. The Doctor sucked at his thumb thoughtfully.

‘Their life-force is dormant,’ the Dalek behind him announced. ‘Before it is activated—’

‘You want the human factor introduced,’ the Doctor interrupted. ‘Yes, I see.’ Maxtible closed the lid of the box as the Doctor looked back to the controlling Dalek.

‘You will obey us,’ it informed him.

‘I will make up my own mind!’ the Doctor exclaimed petulantly.

‘Doctor!’ Maxtible protested. ‘Do not antagonize them.’

The Dalek moved forward, forcing the Doctor to retreat a few steps. ‘Refusal will mean the destruction of your time machine,’ it stated.

‘And if I agree,’ the Doctor argued, ‘it means the possible creation of a super-race of Daleks. Not a very pretty thought, is it?’ He stared mildly at both Maxtible and Waterfield. Maxtible puffed at his cigar with apparent composure. Waterfield fidgeted, clearly terrified that the Doctor was going to refuse to co-operate. The Doctor sighed. ‘On the other hand, you do have my TARDIS.

Without it, I’m stuck here, aren’t I?’ He sighed again, then chewed at his lip. Finally, he turned back to the Dalek. ‘I have no choice, do I? Very well, I agree.’ He heard Waterfield gasp with relief.

The Dalek gave no sign that it had ever expected any other decision. ‘The human being with you must not be aware of the trial,’ it instructed.

‘I quite understand,’ the Doctor said meekly.

‘Then make him begin the test.’

‘What must he do?’ asked the Doctor.

Maxtible waved his cigar towards his partner. ‘He must attempt to rescue Waterfield’s daughter.’

That made more sense of things now, the Doctor mused.

That painting of Victoria’s mother in the study was there so that Jamie would be able to identify Victoria once he found her, and to provoke his interest in the girl. While Jamie might have wished to rescue a girl he had never met, showing him her picture for a while first was subtly conditioning him to feel that he knew her. Clever; and not the sort of thing that would ever have occurred to the Daleks. The subtleties of human emotion were entirely absent in them. That was the point of this whole experiment.

That meant that there had to be some human being who was working with the Daleks. Waterfield and Maxtible were being forced to co-operate to keep Victoria alive. But was there another human who was supplying aid to the Daleks? One who had access to the house, and who would not care about the fate of Victoria?

Jamie was staring at the painting of the late Mrs Waterfield once again. Something within him was definitely stirred by the portrait. It was a shame that he could not meet this Victoria, but she was a prisoner of the Daleks, if he was to believe the Doctor. He wished he could help the poor child, but he had no idea where to begin to look for her.

Assuming she was even in this house anywhere, it was a huge place. Coming back from the stables with the Doctor, he had seen the outside of the house for the first time. It was immense: three stories tall, and with two long wings, each with two floors. Judging from the amount of windows he’d seen, there had to be at least a hundred rooms in the place.

And if she was not in the house, then she could be anywhere in the grounds. Maybe even in a dungeon, if this place had one. It would not

surprise him if it did. He had to try and get some idea of where to start looking. Maybe from that nice wee maid, Mollie.

The door opened, and the wee maid herself popped in.

'There you are, sir,' she said, over her shoulder. Arthur Terrall walked past her and into the room.

'Thank you, Mollie,' he said. Then he caught sight of Jamie by the fireplace and frowned. 'May I ask what you are doing in this house?'

'That's funny,' Jamie replied, clenching his fists. 'I was just going to ask you the very same thing.'

Ruth Maxtible swept into the room, smiling sweetly.

'You two gentlemen have been introduced?' she asked brightly.

'Aye,' Jamie growled. 'We've met.'

Terrall said in a cold voice: 'It seems, Ruth, that your father has the oddest collection of house guests these days.'

'Now, Arthur!' chided Ruth. 'Please.' She gave Jamie a slight shrug. 'You must forgive him, Mr McCrimmon.'

'It's becoming a habit,' Jamie answered, glaring at Terrall over her shoulder. He was still fairly certain that for all his protestations of innocence the young dandy had paid Toby to kidnap him. He could not see any reason why a perfect stranger like Terrall should do that, but he could not see much reason for anything that had happened the past few days.

Terrall bristled at Jamie's tone. 'I have never cared for insolence.'

'Oh, aye?' sneered Jamie. 'Well, I'm not keen on arrogance myself.'

Ruth moved to stand between them, glaring at each in turn. 'Why, you bite at each other as if you were old enemies,' she complained.

Jamie realized that she was unfortunately caught in the middle of this. 'I'm sorry if I was rude,' he said, speaking to her and not Terrall.

'Come,' replied Ruth, giving an encouraging smile. 'I want you both to be friends. Won't you be so, to please me?'

Jamie found himself weakening. Ruth was obviously well versed in

persuasion. Before he could make his mind up to agree to let bygones be bygones, Terrall suddenly gave a loud moan and staggered into the mantelpiece.

'Arthur!' exclaimed Ruth in concern. 'What's the matter?' She moved to help him as he gripped the side of his neck, his face contorting with pain. He could not reply and simply shook his head. Ruth took his arm, then glanced at Jamie. 'You must excuse us,' she said. Helping Terrall to stand, she gently led him to the door. 'I'll help you to your room, Arthur,' she said. Together they left the sitting room and a very puzzled Jamie.

What was going on here? Was Terrall really sick, or was it an 'illness' that came and went at his convenience? He did not appear ill most of the time. Still, his behaviour was inexplicable if he wasn't sick in some way. This was a very odd house, no doubt of that. The men were either rogues or madmen, and that influence seemed to have spread to the Doctor of late. Happily, the women were all cheerful and gentle. His eyes went back to the portrait once again.

The clock on the mantel chimed gently. Jamie glanced at it. Eleven thirty. Almost lunch-time, in fact. He was starting to feel a little hungry. The door opened again, and Mollie entered the room.

'Sir?'

'Aye?' Jamie snapped, then caught himself. He was still in a bit of a caustic mood from his encounter with Terrall.

'I wish you'd call me Jamie,' he told her, grinning.

'Oh, I couldn't do that, sir,' Mollie replied, with as broad a grin on her own face. 'What would the master say?'

'Who cares?' sniffed Jamie. 'Well, what can I do for you?'

Mollie curtsied. 'If you tell me where your cases are, sir

– yours and the Doctor's – I'll have them taken up to your room.' She giggled 'Have them taken . . .' she repeated. 'I daresay I'll be doing it myself.'

'Oh, well.' Jamie racked his thoughts for a plausible excuse. 'We didn't have time to pick up our luggage,' he said, with inspiration. 'It'll be following along.'

‘Oh.’ It was impossible to tell if the maid believed him or not.

‘Why do you say you’ll have to take the bags?’ asked Jamie. ‘Surely in a house this size there are some male servants to do the carrying?’

‘There used to be, sir,’ Ruth replied. ‘But not now. Most of them have left.’

‘Left?’ That sounded very odd to Jamie. ‘And why would that be? Doesn’t Mr Maxtible pay you much?’

‘Oh, I’ve no complaints on that score,’ Mollie said hastily. ‘No, it isn’t that.’ She lowered her voice slightly.

‘They do say as how the house is haunted, sir. Mr Kitson, the butler, left just last week. Even cook and the two footmen are complaining again.’

That sounded more like it! Jamie had travelled with the Doctor long enough to be able to spot a possible clue.

‘Haunted?’ he prompted. ‘You mean ghosties walking the battlements at night, clanking chains and all that?’

Mollie giggled at the thought. ‘Bless you, none of that, sir.’ In a conspiratorial voice she explained. ‘Noises, sir, mostly, in the night. I’ve never heard anything, sir. I sleep like a log, and always have. And my nerves are steady as a rock.’

‘They are that,’ agreed Jamie. ‘I’m glad you’ve got over that nasty fright you had earlier on.’

‘That horrible, rough man.’ The maid shook her head.

‘Miss Ruth said it was all just a game, but I’m not sure of that. It was a bit mean-spirited for fun, and I’ve never fainted before. Truly I haven’t, sir.’

‘Not sir; Jamie,’ the Scot insisted. Mollie gave another giggle at the thought. ‘Tell me about Arthur Terrall, Mollie.’

‘He’s Miss Ruth’s fiance, sir,’ the maid replied. ‘He’s a kind man, sir, usually.’ It was obvious that she was overdoing the *sir* deliberately to provoke Jamie. He grinned back at her, liking her cheeky attitude.

‘Usually?’

‘Well,’ explained Mollie, ‘when he’s a bit odd, or his temper’s up as it has been lately, I just say to myself

“Inkerman” and then it’s all right.’

Jamie couldn’t follow any of that. ‘Inkerman?’ he repeated, baffled.

‘Yes, sir. Out in the Crimea, he was. They do say that Mr Terrall was wounded out there. My uncle was killed at Inkerman, sir. So I do know what it’s like with soldiers.’

Jamie began to understand. She was referring to some war that must have taken place in the previous few years.

He had been on the battlefield of Culloden Field himself, and knew from personal experience that Mollie was correct. War could twist a man’s mind around so that he sometimes had trouble telling the real from the imaginary.

Was that what was wrong with Terrall then?

Mollie glanced at the clock. ‘Oh, sir! I’m behind with my work. I’d best get a move on.’ She picked up the tray of tea things she’d brought in for Jamie hours earlier and turned to hurry out. She gasped and stopped short, upsetting one of the cups. Cold tea sloshed out and onto the Doctor’s coat as he barged through the door.

‘Oh, sir, I am sorry!’ she exclaimed, flustered. ‘But I didn’t hear you or see you there.’

‘That’s quite all right, Mollie,’ the Doctor assured her, borrowing a napkin to dab at the small stain on his coat.

‘One more won’t be noticed.’

‘You won’t tell the master I was so clumsy, will you sir?’

‘I wouldn’t dream of it,’ he assured her with a smile. ‘Off you go, then.’ As she left the room carrying the rattling tray, the Doctor steeled himself and looked across at Jamie.

He was not at all keen on what he had to do now to his young friend.

15

Double Dealing

Jamie had watched this exchange between the Doctor and Mollie, almost biting his tongue to keep quiet. Now they were alone, he exploded; 'Now look here—'

'Do brush up on your history, Jamie,' the Doctor interrupted. 'I can't be around to cover for you all the time.

In the Crimean War the British, the French and the Turks fought against the Russians and—'

'Never mind about that!' Jamie snapped, getting more annoyed by the minute.

'I thought you'd be interested,' said the Doctor, pouting.

'I watched the charge of the Light Brigade, you know.

Magnificent folly.'

Jamie poked a finger sharply at the Doctor, who jumped back to avoid losing an eye. 'Where have you been?' he demanded.

Hanging his head on one side, the Doctor gave a hesitant smile. 'Looking around,' he said unhelpfully.

'What for?' snapped Jamie. 'The TARDIS?'

'My,' said the Doctor mildly, 'you're in a temper.'

'Oh, am I?' yelled his young companion. 'Is that bad?

Does that mean I won't be co-operative? That I won't do everything I'm told?'

The Doctor blinked several times. 'What's that?' he asked.

'I heard you and Waterfield,' Jamie said accusingly.

'Eavesdropping again.' The Doctor shook his head. 'I've warned you about that.'

'Well, whatever it is,' Jamie retorted, 'I don't like what you're doing.'

'Jamie,' the Doctor pleaded. 'Listen to me.' He put a hand on Jamie's shoulder, but the young Scot shrugged it off.

'No,' he said angrily. 'You seem to be forgetting things.

The TARDIS was stolen and a man was murdered. We were kidnapped and dragged here. How do you think I feel when I find you as friendly as you like with the murderer?'

'Waterfield didn't murder that man,' the Doctor assured him.

'All right then,' Jamie said, pacing up and down with restless energy. It was clear that he was very angry, feeling snubbed by the Doctor, abused by all that had happened to him and wanting some positive course of action to set out on. 'Let's say I believe that. In that case he's just a thief and a kidnapper.'

'The Daleks forced him—'

'The Daleks!' yelled Jamie, throwing his hands theatrically into the air. 'You tell me that they're behind all this, but I haven't seen any Daleks. You're talking about them, but where are they? Why don't you show them to me?'

The Doctor chewed at his fingernails nervously. 'Listen, Jamie—' he tried again.

'No, you'll not talk your way around me this time.

Doctor. You're up to something with Waterfield and this man Maxtible, aren't you? I saw you skulking about with them. What is it? Some scientific invention, eh? They're got you all interested in it, and I'm being fobbed off with silly stories because I'm too ignorant to understand. Is that it?'

'It's not like that at all,' the Doctor protested. 'I assure you, Jamie, if you'll just listen to me for a few moments, I can explain everything.'

'Twist everything, don't you mean?' Jamie glared at the Doctor, and then at the door as Waterfield walked into the room. 'Ah, here's your friend!'

The Doctor grimaced at Waterfield. 'Just a little disagreement,' he said apologetically.

'I heard voices raised,' the scientist murmured.

'And that's not all you'll hear,' snapped Jamie. He was becoming quite red in the face.

'Jamie seems to believe I've been lying to him,' the Doctor explained

to Waterfield.

‘Well?’ demanded Jamie. ‘Haven’t you?’

‘He doesn’t believe the Daleks are here,’ the Doctor added.

Waterfield looked shocked. ‘But it’s the truth!’ he protested.

‘Aye?’ Jamie stopped pacing for a moment. ‘The kind of truth you told Arthur Terrall, maybe? That your daughter was in Paris?’

‘I had no option.’ Waterfield looked down at the carpet.

‘I had to tell him that.’

‘And you’ve found another story to tell me.’ Jamie shook his head and turned away in disgust.

‘You must believe me, what I tell you is the truth,’ the scientist protested, his face twisted in emotional pain. ‘The Daleks are holding my daughter a prisoner in the south wing of this house.’

‘Then why don’t you try and get her back?’ demanded Jamie. Waterfield merely hung his head, refusing to meet the young man’s eyes. Turning to the Doctor, Jamie snapped, ‘And what are you doing about it?’

‘What can I do?’ asked the Doctor. ‘Be reasonable, Jamie.’ He tried to look sincere. ‘Waterfield here is tied hand and foot because of his daughter. And we are equally bound because of the TARDIS.’

Jamie gave him a filthy look. ‘And that’s all you can think about, isn’t it? The TARDIS. And the pair of you stand about all day doing nothing. Well, I’m sick to death of it.’ He marched angrily across the room.

‘Where are you going?’ called the Doctor, anxiously.

‘To be by myself for a bit,’ Jamie snapped without turning around. He stopped with his hand on the handle of the french doors. ‘Do you mind?’

‘Not a bit,’ the Doctor said. ‘But a word of warning.

Don’t try and be a one-man army. Leave well enough alone. This situation needs careful planning and a great deal of thought. I don’t want you ruining everything by going off on some wild, ill-conceived

crusade to rescue Victoria Waterfield. Is that clear?'

Jamie flung open the french door and stormed out, slamming the door behind him. The Doctor hurried over and peered through the glass. Waterfield joined him at the door.

'Are you sure you did not go a little too far, Doctor?' he asked anxiously.

The Doctor gave him a reassuring smile. 'Just a little fuel to add to the fire,' he replied. 'Tell Maxtible that I'll be along to the laboratory shortly.'

'Very well, Doctor,' agreed Waterfield. He seemed unconvinced. 'If you're quite sure.'

'Yes, yes,' the Doctor insisted. 'It'll be all right. Once our young friend's cooled his heels a bit, he'll start striking out on his own. And you dropped the hint about the south wing beautifully.' He gave Waterfield a cheery grin. 'In a short while, Jamie will have talked himself into doing what he thinks we don't wish him to do – rescuing your daughter.'

Terrall had succumbed to Ruth's concern and rested for a short while. He was not at all sure what was happening to him. These terrible pains in his head were getting worse, and more and more frequent. He was aware that his temper was on a short fuse these days, and that everyone was treating him like a leper. Even if Ruth's father had not abruptly stopped holding parties, most of Terrall's old friends would have found some excuse or other not to attend. The problem was acute, but Terrall was out of his depth.

He had spoken of this to Maxtible who had simply fobbed the whole matter off. 'Nerves, my dear boy, nerves,'

he had said airily. 'Impending marriage sometimes does that to a bachelor, you know.' Terrall didn't find this explanation convincing, but once Maxtible made his mind up there was absolutely no changing it.

Ruth was pressuring him to visit a doctor in the City, but Terrall didn't like that idea. If he was honest, it was because he was terrified of what the doctor might tell him.

Terrall was afraid that he was going insane. He knew what the asylums were like, and the thought of being locked up in one of them

plagued his nightmares. He would sooner die than be sent to Bedlam.

Finally, unable to rest any longer, he left his room and went outside, Sometimes the fresh air made him feel better, but not this day. He caught sight of Jamie striding across the lawn to the formal gardens. The sight of the young man made Terrall burn inwardly, and he turned aside from his own walk. He was about to return to the house when a movement by the stables caught his eye. It was that wretched Toby, waving him over as if he were the gentleman and Terrall the servant. What impudence.

Terrall considered ignoring the fool, but reluctantly made his way across to the stables instead.

'Well,' he snapped. 'What is it? You wanted to speak to me?'

Toby seemed to recall who was master finally. Touching his head deferentially, he murmured, 'Good of you to talk to me, sir.'

'Never mind that.' Terrall glared at him. 'I shall give you two minutes and no more.'

Toby shuffled his feet for a moment, then looked up again, his eyes blazing. 'I want me rights, guv'nor. No more and no less.'

'Don't mumble at me, fellow,' said Terrall coldly. 'What do you mean, your rights?'

Toby held out his fist and opened it. In his grubby palm was the gold coin he'd picked up earlier. ''Alf a guinea,' he complained. 'That's what you gave me, and that wasn't what we agreed on.'

What an impudent fellow. 'Consider yourself lucky to get anything,' Terrall told him.

'Tisn't right, sir,' the servant insisted. 'Tisn't fair!'

'You'll get no more from me.' Terrall moved closer to Toby. 'Take my advice: keep away from this house and this property. Find the nearest road to London and take it.' He turned to leave.

'Ah, London, sir,' said Toby, a crafty note creeping into his voice. 'Yes. I dare say I can earn something for my stories there.'

Turning back slowly, Terrall felt his anger rising.

'Stories?'

Toby touched his head again. ‘I won’t be detaining an important gentleman like yourself with it now, sir.’ He shrugged. ‘Like as not my two minutes is up, anyhow.’

‘What stories?’ asked Terrall.

‘No, that’s all right, sir.’ Toby gave him a watery smile.

‘I shall take a stroll to London, sir, just like you say and–’

He squealed as Terrall reached out and grabbed his lapels.

Hauling in the shaken man, Terrall glowered at him.

‘Don’t play with me, you wretch,’ he warned.

Shaking himself free of Terrall’s angry grip, Toby backed away several paces. His eyes flickered nervously as he looked to get past Terrall and away. ‘Keep off me!’ he said, his voice shaking with fear and anger. ‘If you want to know, there’s plenty who’ll pay to hear what I’ve got to tell them.’

‘Indeed?’

‘You blow too hot and cold for me,’ Toby complained, shifting the subject. ‘Telling me this one minute, that the next. Nor paying up, then paying me too little.’

‘You know nothing,’ sneered Terrall.

‘Don’t I, though?’

Terrall regarded the nervous servant with disgust. ‘Who would believe you, anyway?’ He knew that there were enemies of Maxtible’s who would like a little scandal they could spread, but it was very unlikely that Toby knew any of them.

‘Pay me off, then,’ suggested Toby. ‘And there’s an end to it.’

Terrall glared at him. ‘Blackmail, is it?’ he said softly.

His anger boiled over at last. ‘Get out!’ he roared. Toby seemed shaken by the vehemence, but turned to go. A wave of hot fury passed through Terrall. Without thinking, he snatched up a pitchfork from the hay and raised it.

Toby heard the sound and spun around. His eyes widened in shock,

but he was a veteran of too many bar-room brawls to panic. Though he was unused to fighting a gentleman, he closed with Terrall. As the young man stabbed at him, Toby side-stepped, grabbed the handle of the pitchfork and swung it aside. Then he grappled with Terrall, slamming the man back against the stable wall as hard as he could. With a gasp of pain, Terrall dropped his weapon. Toby released him and grabbed the pitchfork.

Reversing it, he slammed the handle down across Terrall's neck. The young man collapsed to the ground.

Breathing heavily, Toby threw aside the pitchfork. Now he'd done it! But what choice had he been given? Mr Terrall would have killed him, just to save himself a sovereign or two. Well, now he would make sure the cheat would pay up. Kneeling down, Toby started to search the unconscious man's pockets.

With a grin, he found a purse. Inside were about a dozen more coins, mostly gold. 'Thank you, Mr Terrall,' Toby said mockingly as he slipped the wallet into his own pocket. Then he came across a set of keys to the house, which he studied thoughtfully.

'Maybe I don't know much to tell,' he said. 'But I wager I'll find something worthwhile in the house now.' Maxtible was a banker of some sort. There would either be lots of cash in the building or maybe some secrets that he could sell off to a rival. Either way, it looked like Toby was about to move up in the world. Shaking the keys, he stood up and flipped Terrall a mocking salute. 'I'll just bid you a good day, Mr Terrall, sir,' he sneered. Chuckling to himself, he walked out of the stables.

After dark, he would let himself into the house. Then he would have a good look around, and see what there was portable that could take that trip to London with him.

16

The Test Begins

Night fell on the troubled house. It brought darkness and stillness, but it could not bring peace.

Jamie had made his preparations and was waiting in the gloom of the sitting room. He had needed a little help, and there had been only one person he could turn to. Normally, he would have placed his faith in the Doctor, but not this day. The Doctor had been acting very

strangely since this whole business had begun. Jamie had never known him to be like this. It was as if being cut off from the TARDIS had sapped his courage and his brains. How could he even think about trusting that rogue Waterfield? Reluctantly, Jamie had come to the conclusion that the Doctor was no longer reliable. Maybe if they found the TARDIS he would improve, but right now the Scot would not trust the Doctor to give him the time of day correctly.

Waterfield and Maxtible were out of consideration, as was that creepy Arthur Terrall. Jamie did consider asking Ruth for her help. She seemed like a nice enough girl, and she was trying to be friendly. Only she was Terrall's finacee, and her loyalty would surely be to him, not Jamie.

Which had left only one person he could turn to for help.

The door opened slowly. Jamie slunk into the shadows until he could see who was entering the room. He did not want to run into the Doctor right now, and certainly not one of the others. There was the flickering glow of an oil lamp in the doorway, and then Mollie slipped into the room and closed the door behind her. She had the lamp burning very low, casting a bluish tint over the room, and not dispelling many shadows. Jamie stepped towards her and she gave a start.

'It's all right, Mollie,' he said softly. 'Did you get me what I needed?'

The young maid nodded, relieved to see him. 'It's over here,' she said, indicating the bureau in the corner of the room. 'I took it from the master's study. He'll not know it's gone for days.'

'That's marvellous,' Jamie said. 'Thanks.'

Mollie gave him a smile, then opened the top of the bureau, 'Here.' She set the lamp down and opened one of the long drawers. She rummaged about for a moment, then pulled out a folded sheet of thick paper. 'Is this what you wanted, sir?'

Taking the paper, Jamie unfolded it and spread it out.

Mollie picked up the lamp and held it aloft, so the light shone on the paper. She turned the wick up a notch, increasing the brightness a trifle.

'Perfect,' Jamie said happily. It was a diagram of the house, done for the restoration work. He tapped part of the drawing. 'This is the south

wing?'

'Yes,' Mollie confirmed. 'But it's been closed off,'

'Completely?'

'Oh, no. There were some repairs about a twelvemonth back, and the master was intending to restore the wing. He was all set to go ahead with the work, then he up and dismissed the builders. Told them he'd call on them when he wanted them, then had a doorway put in to close off the wing from the rest of the house.' She bent closer to Jamie's ear. 'Some of the servants said that's where the ghosts and all are, and he wants them to stay there, so he sealed them in. Not that I believe in ghosts, you understand, sir.'

Jamie nodded. 'Will you show me the doorway, Mollie?'

The maid was obviously more nervous about that part of the house than she claimed. But she had courage. 'All right,' she agreed. As Jamie folded the plan up, she asked,

'What are you going to do there, sir?'

He gave her a big smile. 'Going hunting a few of your wee ghosties, Mollie.' He winked at her, then took the lamp from her. 'We'd best be going, if you're up to it.'

She nodded. 'Follow me, sir.'

If Maxtible's workroom had been crowded before, it was now bursting at the seams. The Daleks had brought several computerized devices through the mirror cabinet and installed them down one wall. These were being monitored by a single Dalek that roved up and down a narrow path through the clutter. Maxtible had taken out and installed several small recording devices the Daleks had brought.

The Doctor was peering in fascination at the instruments. 'And you say every particle of Jamie's feelings are recorded here, on these machines?' he asked Maxtible.

'Precisely,' Maxtible said with enthusiasm. 'They are then transferred into thought-patterns upon silver wire in the heart of these devices. A wonderful creation.'

The second Dalek, positioned beside the cabinet, spoke up. 'It is for you, Doctor, to select the major emotions and thought processes to

make up the human factor. These will then be encoded by the computers for transfer.'

'I understand,' the Doctor replied.

Blowing a cloud of smoke, Maxtible faced the Dalek.

'I'm sure the Doctor will give us every co-operation,' he insisted.

The Dalek did not reply to him. Instead, its dome spun so that the eystick stared at the Doctor. 'We shall watch your every move,' it warned him.

'Yes,' agreed the Doctor. 'I'm sure you will.' They were not stupid enough to allow him any freedom. It would not take him more than a moment to wreck the entire experiment. He gestured to the machines again. 'And every step of Jamie's progress is covered?'

'Yes,' the Dalek answered. 'We shall know at all times where he is, what he is doing and what he is feeling.'

The monitoring Dalek spun its eye about. 'The young human being is on his way,' it reported.

Maxtible rubbed his hands together in satisfaction.

'Then the recording machines can now be activated.'

'Commence recording,' the first Dalek ordered. The second faced the computers and began to manipulate the dials. The first Dalek glided towards the door of the room.

'Follow me,' it ordered the Doctor. 'A separate room has been established closer to the test site. You will monitor from there and make your selections.'

Two sets of equipment! The Doctor had to admire the Daleks for their thoroughness. They were taking no chances. Even if he could somehow sabotage their experiment, they would have a second set of readings to work from. 'Very well,' he agreed. Maxtible and Waterfield accompanied them from the room.

With the monitoring station working, the second Dalek returned to the mirror cabinet. It was time to report the commencement of the experiment to Skaro.

'Here we are, sir,' Mollie said softly.

Jamie held the oil lamp higher. It did not make any difference; the alcove he was staring at still looked dark and forbidding. There was no handle on the large, dark panel. ‘Here?’ he asked.

‘Yes, sir.’ Mollie shivered. ‘I came past here one day when the Master was standing there. He was very angry when he saw me and ordered me to keep away. And I have, until now.’

‘I see.’ Jamie moved closer with the lamp. From what Mollie had said, it sounded as if Maxtible had some secret way through this panel. The south wing housed at the very least some guilty little secrets that Maxtible did not want the servants to know about. Waterfield might well have been telling the truth about this being where Victoria was being held captive. Now all he had to do was to find the secret trigger to open the panel.

In the laboratory, the Daleks’ machines hummed to themselves in varying pitches. Lights and dials flashed and registered. The reflections of these lights in the glass tubing made the room look like a vast Christmas tree.

The door to the corridor opened briefly and a dark figure scurried inside. When he was certain he hadn’t been discovered, Toby pulled a box of matches from his pocket and struck one. Holding it up, he used its feeble light to examine the room.

This did not look like it would hold any money or negotiable goods. The place was set up by a scientist, or a doctor, or something. He peered briefly at the computers, unable to fathom them. Too big to move, whatever they were. His eyes roved about the room, and came to rest on the three packing cases.

That was more like it. There might be something valuable in those. He gave a sharp curse as the flame from the match burned his fingers. Shaking the light out, he went over to the nearest of the cases and opened the lid. He struck another match one-handed and held it over the open top of the case.

Inside was the glint of metal. Toby peered at it, puzzled.

Some sort of metal can, with odd-shaped things stuck to it.

This must be what Waterfield had been inventing. He had no idea what it could be, but if he could somehow get one of these cases outside, then there was probably a way to sell it in London for a handsome fee. These scientists were always trying to steal each other’s

inventions.

He shook the match out and lit a third. In the flare of light, he saw there there was one of the devices just like the one in the box standing by the cabinet at the end of the room. ‘That’s odd,’ he growled, sure it had not been there a minute ago. He let the lid of the case fall back into place and stared at the contraption. It still did not make any kind of sense to him, and he could not imagine what possible use it might have.

The rod sticking out of the top of the thing moved to line up with him.

Toby froze in place. The thing was working! What the devil was going on? He took a step backward.

The machine moved a few paces towards him. It was somehow aware of him – and following him. Toby backed further away, stopping only when he hit one of the benches. All the time, the metal thing had been moving.

The only thing that Toby could think of was that this contraption had been made by Waterfield and Maxtible.

They were like some real-life Frankensteins, creating living creatures out of inanimate materials.

Toby’s nerve abruptly broke. With a horrified cry, he lunged for the door.

The Dalek’s gun-stick moved into position and fired.

Caught mid-step, Toby screamed as the lethal blast ripped into him. Then he fell forward, lifeless, to the floor.

Mollie gasped and gripped Jamie’s arm in fear. ‘What was it, sir? What was it?’

Glancing over his shoulder uncertainly, Jamie stared back down the corridor. That terrible scream had come from deeper in the house. ‘It wasn’t a ghost, Mollie,’ he said, gently. ‘I’m sure of that. That was a human voice.’

‘Oh, sir,’ she said, softly. Her eyes were round and wide with shock.

Jamie held out the lantern. ‘Take the lamp, Mollie,’ he said. ‘Go back to your room and lock the door. Will you do that?’

‘Yes!’ She almost snatched the lamp from him, comforted by its glow.

‘Do you want me to go with you?’ asked Jamie, worried for her. ‘To see you get there safely?’

‘No, sir,’ she said. ‘It’s the other way, and I’m not afraid.

I’ll be all right. But what about you, sir?’

‘I’ll be fine,’ he assured her. Looking around, he spotted the candle on the nearby table. ‘I’ll use that.’ He lit the candle from the lamp. ‘Now off you go, so I don’t have to worry about you.’

‘Yes, sir.’ Mollie gave him a final concerned look, then fled down the corridor, away from the direction of the scream. She turned down a far corridor and the light from the lamp vanished.

Jamie concentrated on the task at hand. That scream had been horrible, but there had been no further noise.

Whatever had caused it must have stopped now.

Something that Waterfield and Maxtible were up to, he had no doubt of that. It made the job of rescuing Victoria all the more important. Holding the candle close to the panel, he started to hunt for any sign of a releasing mechanism.

There were faint marks on parts of the frame. He looked closer. They were slight grease-stains, from the touch of sweaty fingers. So there was a hidden catch here! Grinning to himself at his cleverness, Jamie tapped at the wooden frame. With a sigh, the panel opened inwards.

Jamie held out the candle to try and see what was ahead.

His hand shook slightly, and some of the hot wax dripped down onto his fingers. Muttering under his breath, Jamie wiped the congealing wax off his hand. As he did so, there was a blur of motion in the doorway.

A large spike shot heavily across the frame, slamming into the wood. Jamie jumped back in shock. If he had taken just one step forward, he’d have been skewered. ‘So that’s the way it is?’ he muttered to himself. If Maxtible guarded this wing so carefully, then there was all the more reason for him to investigate.

Recovered from the surprise by now, Jamie moved to the edge of the

doorway. There did not seem to be any other little tricks like that one. Ducking, he slipped under the spike, and away from the panel. Then he straightened up and examined the place he found himself in.

It was another corridor, remarkably bare, terminating in a large picture window. There was a half-moon, and the pale silvered light shone across the tops of the black shapes of trees. The pale light made the corridor a realm of shadows which the poor glow from his candle did nothing to dispel. There were a couple more windows down the left-hand side of the corridor, and several doors on the right. There was a branching corridor at the end. As Jamie took a couple of paces forward, there was a slight creaking sound from the boards around the corner.

Jamie stood still, watching. He didn't believe there were any ghosts here, but there was something. Into view stepped a huge man. In the poor light, he looked like a mountain with legs. 'Hullo,' called Jamie softly. There was no response. The man simply stood there. 'Who are you?'

asked the young Scot.

The waiting man fell into a slight crouch, and waited for Jamie to make the next move. Jamie did not know what was going on here, but it was quite clear that the man was some sort of a guard, who would do his very best to stop Jamie getting past him.

17

A Test Of Skill

Cautiously, Jamie moved forward, studying his opponent as he did so. The man was huge, and even in the poor light it was clear that he was very muscular. From his stance, he was used to fighting. It looked like this was going to be a hard, if not impossible, person to defeat.

Jamie was no coward, but he was no fool, either. If he made this a match of strength, he would end up with any number of broken bones – if he survived. Though he was fairly strong himself, Jamie could see that he was hopelessly outclassed. Which meant that he would have to rely on his skill and agility, and hope that he had the advantage there at least.

Closing in, Jamie rushed the final few paces, seeking to grapple his opponent. The man moved to meet him, very swiftly for his size. His huge hands darted out, one catching Jamie's left hand. Instantly, the

man squeezed and pulled.

Jamie gave a gasp of pain as the vice tightened on his fist. He tried to pull away, but the other man's strength was incredible. He could not get free. So instead Jamie went forward. The giant, caught off-guard, stumbled back a pace. Jamie slammed him hard in the stomach with his shoulder. It was like hitting a sheet of metal, but the other fighter staggered back, momentarily releasing his hold on Jamie's fist. Jamie wrenched it free and jumped back.

Massaging his aching hand, he studied his foe again.

The other man straightened up, watching him closely, but making no move to attack. Feinting to the left, Jamie twisted and punched the man hard in the stomach. He grunted slightly, and slammed out a swift jab of his own.

Jamie managed to jerk his head to one side so that the blow almost missed, catching him a glancing blow to the ear, which stung. Trying to ignore the pain, Jamie punched the man a second time in the stomach, with as little effect as before.

The fighter punched back at Jamie's mid-section. The wiry Scot managed to block the blow with his arm, but the punch sent a jar of pain to his shoulder. Grabbing the man's arm, Jamie pushed it up and away from his body, at the same time slipping his right leg behind the man's knee and pulling.

His opponent collapsed backwards, but managed to grab Jamie as he fell. Arms and legs tangled, they slammed into the hard wooden floor. There was a pain in Jamie's ankle, caught under the big man's leg, but the other man took most of the impact. Jamie tried to roll free, but his opponent held on to his wrist. Using his free hand, Jamie chopped at the other man's forearm, forcing him to let go.

They struggled for a moment, each trying to grab the other without being caught as well. Jamie finally pulled free and staggered back to his feet. As the big man attempted to rise, Jamie lashed out with a savage kick.

His opponent had been expecting this and grabbed Jamie's ankle, heaving up as he rose. Jamie was yanked off balance and crashed to the floor. The big man twisted at his ankle, attempting to shatter the bones. In desperation, Jamie lashed out with his free foot, catching the other man behind the knee. His leg gave way and he fell, releasing his grasp.

Trying to ignore his pains, Jamie managed to regain his feet at the same time as his foe. They circled one another, both of them warily looking for an advantage. The window was now behind Jamie and the light of the moon shone full on his foe. There were beads of sweat on the man's face, and he was breathing hard. Jamie himself was soaked with sweat and panting like a dog on a hot day. If this fight became a matter of endurance, the other man was clearly ahead on points. Jamie's one consolation was that he probably knew a few more fighting tricks.

The giant lunged forward again. Jamie dodged to one side. His foe had miscalculated his attack, and Jamie had his opening. He kicked out, connecting with the man's ankle. The man stumbled, and Jamie brought both his hands down together on the big man's exposed neck. With a grunt of pain he fell to his knees, shaking his injured head. Jamie punched the groggy man's jaw, and almost broke his own fist. Managing to over-come the pain, the other man clambered upright and spun to charge again.

Once more Jamie avoided the clinch, slipping under the arm's shakier grip and landing a semi-effective jab to the man's kidneys.

They had come full circle now, and Jamie had his back to the window again as the man charged a third time.

Slowed down by sheer exhaustion, Jamie could not move completely out of the way. More by luck than by planning, his leg tripped the huge man. As he fell, Jamie hit him once again across the back of his neck.

Unable to stop himself, the giant slammed into the window. The glass shattered, and the man plunged through the opening.

Jamie was stunned by the sudden end to the fight. He hadn't intended to throw the man out of the window. The fall might have killed him. Gasping for air, the Scot staggered across to the window and looked out.

The giant had fallen only a few feet. Somehow he had managed to grip the lead drainpipe and was holding on in desperation. The ground was some thirty feet below him and looked in the moonlight to be a gravel path. Such a drop would at least severely injure the man. If he landed badly, it would kill him.

Shocked, Jamie stared down at his opponent's face.

Twisted with pain and shock as it was, Jamie could see a mute plea in the man's eyes. What should he do? Jamie was tempted to go on with his search for only a brief moment.

There was a cracking sound. The support holding the pipe to the old stone wall suddenly pulled free, and the pipe jerked two feet or so from the wall. The man clinging to it almost lost his grip. Instinctively Jamie reached down through the shattered frame with both arms. The wavering man grabbed out with his free hand. Jamie clutched his wrist, and felt the man clamp onto his own. Their hands entwined, Jamie held on tightly.

The pipe pulled completely free and fell away from the house. There was a huge tug on Jamie's shoulder as he suddenly bore the whole weight of the other man.

Distantly; he heard the crash of the pipe hitting the gravel.

His face twisted, Jamie concentrated on holding the man and not being pulled through the window himself. He pressed his shoulder against the wall by the window, his other hand outflung for support.

The giant groped about, then gripped the window-sill with his free hand. Jamie took the strain as the other man managed to heave himself upward. Avoiding the few shards of glass that were still clinging in the shattered frame, the man strained and worked until he was able to get one foot onto the sill. Then he released his grip on Jamie's wrist and pulled himself through the opening before collapsing onto the floor inside.

His shoulder burning with pain from the ordeal, Jamie lay back against the wall for support. His ears were ringing and his head spinning. Gradually, though, his senses and heart calmed down. He looked down at the man he had almost killed, and then saved.

The giant had made no move to rise or speak. He sat on the floor, breathing strenuously, and looking up at Jamie, clearly puzzled. Jamie did not know whether the fight was over or merely paused. Finally the other man stood up slowly. He made no move to attack. Instead, he continued to stare at Jamie and then shook his head once.

'Is that it?' asked Jamie, still short of breath. 'Or do we have to fight again?'

The other man shook his head again.

‘Well,’ Jamie said, straightening up, ‘I’m going on with my search for Victoria Waterfield. I know she must be in here somewhere. Will you let me pass?’

Again, the other man shook his head slightly. Then he turned and pointed down the side corridor. Turning back, he peered hard at Jamie again, as if trying to make up his mind on something. His eyes strayed to the window, and that seemed to decide him. He beckoned Jamie to follow, and then set off down the side corridor. It looked as if the man was going to help him.

Puzzled by this sudden change of heart, Jamie wondered if he could trust the giant. On the other hand, the man was leading the way Jamie wanted to go anyway, so what did he have to lose? Shrugging, Jamie set off behind his odd guide.

The side corridor was longer than the first one he had entered and probably ran the length of the south wing.

There were a number of doors leading off to the right, but the muscular giant ignored them all. To the left were more windows. The moonlight streamed in, giving the passage an eerie appearance. As the branches of the trees outside shivered in the night breeze, the shadows they cast seemed to ripple almost sentiently down the corridor.

As they passed one room, Jamie paused. There was the faintest bar of light from under it. ‘Hey,’ he said, softly.

When the other man turned around, Jamie gestured at the door. His guide shook his head, clearly not wanting Jamie to enter. The young Scot hesitated. Why didn’t the other man want him to look in here? Could he be trusted?

Making his mind up, Jamie tested the handle, then threw the door open.

The room revealed was very drab. There was a small window with a grille, a bed, a table and a single chair. The bed had been stripped, and there was only one sign that anyone had been inside the room in living memory. On the floor was a small square of crumpled fabric, edged with lace; a woman’s handkerchief. Jamie looked at his guide, who shook his head vehemently.

‘That may belong to Victoria,’ Jamie muttered. ‘It could be a clue.’ Why didn’t this man want Jamie to investigate?

Was he trying to lure Jamie away from the girl, knowing he could not beat him in a fair fight? Refusing to accept the refusal, Jamie marched into the room and picked up the handkerchief.

As he did so, the giant reached out and grabbed him, hauling him backwards by the scruff of his neck. The fight was on again! Jamie hauled himself around, about to punch the man, when there was a whistling noise from the room, barely a foot from where he stood. A huge guillotine blade slammed down from the roof, crashing into the floor. It shattered the wood and sank several inches into the floor, quivering.

Jamie stared at the blade in horror. If he had not been pulled out of there, he would by lying dead on the floor in two large pieces. He glanced at his rescuer and gave the man a shaky smile. The big man grinned openly, and slapped Jamie heartily on the back. Jamie winced; he might have just broken a rib. The giant gestured down the corridor again.

'Lead on, Macduff,' Jamie told him. 'You've more than proved your good intentions.'

The other man nodded and set off. Jamie followed close behind.

Unseen by either man, a Dalek moved around the corner of the corridor behind them. Its eyestick watched them move away, but its gun-stick remained in the rest position.

It was not yet time for the human subject to die.

The Doctor perched on a high stool between the Dalek recording devices. There were several screens, all registering readings that he could only follow with difficulty. The Daleks did not use writing as such; they weren't exactly built to hold a pen; but their language was translatable into binary notation for their computers. The Doctor could scan-read the binary, but making sense of the Dalek words was quite another matter. Their thought processes were very alien.

Below the screens were several dials. They had been constructed for Dalek arms, but by inserting his hand into the circular depression and spreading his fingers as wide as they would go, the Doctor could adjust the controls.

Directly in front of him, there was a small glass-covered cavity. Within this cavity, a laser beam was etching information onto a microscopically thin strand of pure silver wire. This was the output

from the Daleks'

monitoring devices, recording the emotions and thought-processes of Jamie as he struggled in the Dalek test.

The low, electronic throbbing of the Dalek heartbeat filled the room. Other sounds; buzzing, scratching and electronically modulated noises overlaid the basic beat.

The only light was the glow from the screens, but that was more than sufficient.

The final screen was a small television monitor. It showed Jamie and his guide walking carefully down a moonlit corridor. The Doctor kept one eye on this as he worked. He constantly made adjustments and checks to the instruments, occasionally tapping one of the monitors as if this would alter its reading.

Behind him, waiting patiently, stood the Red Dalek, its gun-stick centered on the Doctor's back. The Doctor had little doubt that it was armed, and even less that if he made one false move, the Dalek would exterminate him without a second thought.

'It took courage to fight Maxtible's Turkish wrestler,'

the Doctor observed.

'The Daleks are afraid of nothing and no one,' his captor replied.

'No, I know that.' The Doctor did not take his eyes from the instruments. His fingers flew over the controls, adjusting and correcting. 'But Jamie saved the Turk's life.

A Dalek would not have done that.'

'Human weakness,' the Dalek responded.

'Ah, but if he hadn't felt compassion and mercy, then he wouldn't have saved the man. And if Jamie hadn't saved him, he would have died in the lethal room trap of yours.'

The Dalek had no response to this logical statement. The Doctor nodded sagely. 'If you want the human factor, a part of it must include compassion and mercy.' He manipulated the controls to register the appropriate data on the wire.

Waterfield stared aghast at the crumpled form of Toby.

‘What is he doing here?’ he asked, shaking.

‘A common thief,’ said Maxtible, contemptuously. He lit another cigar and drew in a deep draught. ‘Come to see what he could steal. No mystery here.’

Waterfield shook his head. Another death. How unfeeling and cold Maxtible could be. It did not matter whether the man was a thief or a bosom friend, he had been killed, in precisely the same manner that Kennedy had been slaughtered. The culprit was only too apparent.

The door to the mirror cabinet opened, and the grey Dalek emerged. It observed that the two humans were examining the dead human. ‘The intruder was destroyed,’

it informed them.

‘What are we to do?’ whined Waterfield. His nerves were in shreds, and he was shaking. ‘Where is the Doctor?

We must tell him.’

The Dalek moved to block his way. ‘No,’ it grated.

‘But why not?’

The arm of the Dalek shot out, slamming into the scientist’s chest. Waterfield gasped and staggered back against the bench. There was a dull pain where the suction pad had impacted.

‘Obey me,’ instructed the Dalek.

Maxtible stepped towards his friend. ‘Waterfield,’ he said urgently. ‘I beg of you, do not antagonize the . . . our friend.’ He gave the Dalek a slight smile.

This was too much for the panicky scientist. ‘Why do you constantly avoid reality, Maxtible?’ he cried, clutching his temples. There was a pounding in his head that threatened to overwhelm him. ‘Another man has died.

Can’t you grasp that fact?’

The Dalek moved forward again. ‘You will hide the remains of the human intruder,’ it ordered.

Maxtible looked down at Toby’s body. The marks of his death-agony

were etched into his face. ‘Cannot you dispose of it?’

‘Silence!’ The Dalek turned to face the cabinet, but its eyestick remained steady, watching them. ‘You will obey.

You will hide the remains of the dead human. There are humans in this house who do not know of the Daleks.

They must not become suspicious.’

Waterfield could not believe his ears. The Dalek didn’t seem to realize that most of the servants had fled the house.

There was only Mollie, the cook and a couple of menservants left. Plus Maxtible's daughter, and that strange fiancé of hers. And how could any of them think that what was happening in this house was normal? They must surely all suspect something. He looked down at Toby's corpse and shook his head. 'No. I won't do it.'

'That is an order,' the Dalek said.

Grasping Waterfield by the elbow, Maxtible dragged him away from the Dalek a few paces. 'My dear fellow,' he said with urgency in his voice, 'we must do as they say. We can't anger them. Do you want to end up like that unfortunate fellow? How will you help Victoria then?' He bent down and pulled a large dust cloth from beneath the work-bench. 'Wrap the body in that.'

Waterfield shook his head once. 'No.' His voice was dull and lifeless.

'But we must!' hissed Maxtible. 'Have you lost your mind? Don't you want to see your daughter again?'

The scientist shook himself, and a slight sob escaped his lips. Then he bowed his head and picked up the sheet.

With heavy steps, he moved to Toby's corpse. He spread the sheet on the ground, then fell on his knees beside the body. Maxtible came to assist, and he heard Waterfield muttering to himself, 'No end to all this evil. No end.' He stared at his fists. 'The hands of the Devil . . .'

This was just so much nonsense to the Dalek. 'Dispose of the body,' it repeated. 'Obey.' Then, certain they would do as they had been ordered, it turned and re-entered the cabinet.

Maxtible slapped Waterfield angrily on the arm. 'What's the matter with you?' he snapped. 'Can we be blamed for all the things that have happened here?' The scientist ignored him and continued to position Toby's body on the sheet, then started to wrap the dust cloth about it. Irritated by his companion's attitude, the financier stormed on, 'No English judge or jury would find it in their hearts to convict us of a solitary thing.'

A strange, almost serene, expression in his eyes, Waterfield shook his head. 'It will never come to that,' he replied with certainty.

'And what is that remark supposed to mean?' growled Maxtible.

‘I have one purpose left in my life and one purpose only.’ Waterfield completed wrapping the body and stood up. ‘That is to see my daughter out of the clutches of those foul creatures. When that is achieved, I shall surrender myself to the authorities and confess my part in all that has happened.’ He bent to grip the edge of the cloth and started to drag the wrapped body towards the door.

Maxtible watched him warily. Then his hand went to a drawer in the work-bench. He opened it a few inches and groped within, watching Waterfield all the time. His hands closed on the Webley pistol he kept in there for emergencies. It was one swift movement to transfer the gun to his jacket pocket, and he closed the drawer silently.

Looking up from his exertions, Waterfield said: ‘You must help me. I cannot manage this alone.’

Maxtible smiled. ‘My dear sir, I am at your service.’ He moved to assist the struggling scientist. The weight of the pistol in his pocket comforted him. It was almost time to dispose of another loose and rapidly unravelling end.

18

Friend And Foe

Jamie leaned against the open window and breathed the cool night air deeply. ‘That’s better,’ he sighed. His senses had finally settled back to normal, and most of the aches in his body had died down to a muted level. He was getting his second wind now and knew that there were bound to be more dangers ahead on this quixotic quest of his. The spike across the first door and the guillotine blade in the room where Victoria had been kept were proof enough of the lethal intentions of her captors; to say nothing of the strange, mute giant who seemed to have switched sides out of gratitude to Jamie.

‘You’re an odd one, I’ll say that for you,’ he muttered, looking up at his companion. The man looked back, his face utterly relaxed. Jamie could read nothing in his expression at all. He grunted. ‘I suppose we’re both a bit touched, eh? Knocking each other all over the places, and then saving one another’s life.’ The giant nodded slowly, but showed no other emotion. ‘You don’t say too much, do you?’ said Jamie.

The other man touched his lips and then shook his head slightly. The meaning was clear.

‘You can’t speak at all?’ guessed Jamie. His companion nodded. ‘I see.’ Jamie grinned. ‘Well, you’re a sight better than a number of people I know who can. I wonder what your name is?’

The giant bent down over the window ledge. In the dust that had settled there in the months the wing had been shut, he wrote with one large finger: KEMEL.

‘Kemel,’ Jamie said, and the man nodded. ‘Well, I’m Jamie.’ He held out his hand. Instead of shaking Kemel barely touched it, then bent his head down, offering his allegiance to Jamie.

The young Scot snatched his hand back abruptly. ‘Hey, what’s this?’ he demanded. ‘We don’t want any of that, Kemel. We’re to be friends, do you hear? Friends.’

Gripping Kemel’s shoulders, he pushed the giant gently upright again.

Kemel seemed a little puzzled by Jamie’s actions. He glanced down at the hand on his shoulder. As Jamie let go, Kemel saw the handkerchief that the young man had picked up, still in Jamie’s fist. He gestured at the piece of cloth, and then pointed to two small initials embroidered in one corner.

‘VW,’ Jamie read. ‘I know. Victoria Waterfield.’

Kemel pulled a small square of paper from behind his belt buckle. Unfolding it gently, he showed Jamie what it held. It was the remains of a small flower, its red petals faded and the stem crushed.

‘What have you got there?’ asked Jamie. Kemel gestured at the flower, then at the handkerchief, and Jamie understood. ‘Miss Victoria gave you that flower?’ Kemel nodded, then folded the paper back up and slipped it back under his belt. Jamie leaned back against the window. ‘You like her, don’t you?’ he mused. ‘Yes, of course you do.

Then why are we fighting, Kemel?’ Kemel shrugged, then cocked his head to one side: a question. ‘Don’t you know what I’m doing here?’ Jamie asked him.

The Turk thought for a moment, obviously trying to explain what he had been told. Finally he gestured at his face, using both hands to sketch in an invisible beard.

‘Maxtible?’ guessed Jamie. Kemel nodded, then pointed at Jamie. ‘Maxtible told you about me?’ Again Kemel nodded. Jamie was

starting to catch on. ‘Aye? And what did he tell you?’

Kemel pointed to the handkerchief, then made a swift chop-ping motion in the air.

Now Jamie understood. ‘Maxtible told you I wanted to harm Miss Victoria.’ The giant nodded, and Jamie scowled.

‘Och, I knew the man was a scoundrel. How the Doctor can stand working with him is beyond me.’ He studied his companion. ‘Listen Kemel, Victoria Waterfield is being held a prisoner here somewhere. I’m here to rescue her, not to harm her. Do you believe me?’

Kemel gave a single nod. He had realized earlier that Jamie was not the homicidal maniac that Maxtible had painted him. He had saved Kemel’s life when he could very easily have either turned away or even pushed him.

Maxtible had mistaken Kemel’s muteness for stupidity just once too often. Angry that he had been lied to, Kemel was glad that he could make amends for his unwitting actions.

He pointed at himself with his forefinger and at Jamie with his middle finger. Then he pointed up the corridor ahead of them with both fingers together.

‘Together?’ Jamie said. ‘Aye, we’ll go together. There’s no one I’d rather have with me on this search.’

The Turk nodded, then strode across to the wall by the door. There was a coil of thick rope on a hook beside it. He pulled the rope down and swung the coil over his shoulder.

Nodding at Jamie, he led the way down the dark corridor.

The Doctor stooped over the controls, his eyes bright with interest. The loop of silver wire was running slowly through the Dalek device. He adjusted the control settings a little more.

Jamie had just shown co-operation, understanding and sympathy. All of these ingredients would have to go into the mix for the human factor. As both the Daleks and the Doctor had anticipated, Jamie was proving to be an excellent specimen to be tested.

Behind the Doctor, the Dalek waited and watched his every action.

It was a long trip from the house to the stables. Waterfield was exhausted as he dragged the sheet-wrapped body of Toby the final few paces through the doors. Maxtible had helped as little as possible and he was still quite fresh. As Waterfield let the body fall to the straw-littered floor, he heard the faint chink of metal in the darkness of one of the stalls.

'What was that?' he asked, shaken. 'Did you hear it?'

'Calm your nerves,' Maxtible snapped. 'It was just a harness swaying in the breeze.'

Waterfield shook his head. 'I tell you—'

His patience finally at an end, Maxtible roared,

'Waterfield, go back to the house!' The scientist's snivellings and absurd, misplaced fears were too much for him to endure any longer.

Shaken by the tone of Maxtible's voice, Waterfield glanced down at the body. 'But we have a task to perform,'

he protested. It was a task he would gladly have given up, of course, but he did not dare disobey the Daleks' orders.

'I'd prefer to attend to it myself,' Maxtible growled. 'I'm sick to death of you.'

'What?' Waterfield looked at his companion, stunned.

Maxtible glowered at him, his expression even more leonine than normal. He appeared almost angry enough to pounce on the smaller scientist and devour him. 'I take you into my house,' he snarled. 'You and your daughter. I provide for you—'

'I know everything you have done,' Waterfield replied meekly.

'And little thanks you've given me for it.' Maxtible pointed at the house with his cigar. 'Did I bring these creatures here deliberately?' he demanded. 'You know I did not. Am I to blame for anything?' He glared at Waterfield, daring him to produce an accusation of any kind.

'No.'

'It is your daughter they have kidnapped,' Maxtible continued. 'One minute you beg me to do everything I can to save her and then the next you blame me for—'

‘Yes, but I don’t mean it like that,’ protested Waterfield.

‘It’s just the price, Maxtible.’ He shuddered, shaken to the core of his being. ‘Kennedy died in the antique shop. Now there’s this poor fellow.’ He stared down at the covered corpse, unaware of the brooding stare that Maxtible gave him, one hand in his pocket, the other holding the glowing cigar. Waterfield was lost in his own agonized conscience.

‘How many more people must die so that my daughter can live?’

‘But we are not the murderers,’ pointed out Maxtible.

‘No,’ Waterfield said in disgust. ‘We are just the silent partners. We condone the killings by our own compliance.

We are just as guilty because we stand by and do nothing.’

He seemed on the verge of weeping.

Maxtible replaced the cigar in his mouth and patted his companion gently on the shoulder. ‘Go back to the house, my friend,’ he said gently. ‘I understand the stress you’re under. This is a foul business, to be sure. Just try and get some rest.’

‘Rest?’ Waterfield gave a barking laugh. ‘I have not had one good night’s sleep since this all began.’ That was evident from the redness of his eyes, the pallor in his face and the weariness which showed in his every movement.

‘The end isn’t far now,’ Maxtible promised him. ‘The Daleks have almost achieved their goals. Once this test is finished, we’ll be rid of them.’ He nodded in sympathy.

‘Go to your room, my friend. You’ve done enough.’

Sighing, Waterfield nodded. He turned and began to shamble out of the stables, utterly oblivious to Maxtible’s actions behind his back.

The financier pulled his hand from his pocket, holding the Webley pistol. He looked at it to be certain that it was loaded, then silently cocked the hammer. Raising it, he centred the weapon on Waterfield’s back.

Another man’s hand gripped his, forcing the pistol down. Startled, Maxtible looked around. Terrall had emerged from the shadows he

had used for concealment, and had prevented Maxtible from shooting Waterfield.

‘What are you doing?’ Maxtible whispered, angered and surprised.

‘Waterfield does not die yet,’ Terrall replied.

Maxtible stared as the scientist vanished in the darkness of the path back to the house. ‘But he says he will confess everything,’ he protested.

The younger man twisted Maxtible’s wrist. Maxtible gave a sharp cry of pain, releasing the pistol. Terrall thrust the gun into his own pocket. ‘Go back to your laboratory,’

he ordered. ‘Waterfield still has work to do.’

‘But he will betray us.’

‘We shall deal with him when the times comes,’ Terrall replied coldly. His voice was starting to rise in tone, harsh and grating, becoming almost mechanical and bearing an eerie resemblance to that of a Dalek. ‘You will obey. You will obey.’ There was the faint smell of static electricity from him.

Shaken, Maxtible nodded hurriedly and set off back to the house, almost at a gallop.

In the darkness of the stables, Terrall watched, rubbing his neck. Then he bent to the body and gripped the sheet.

There was work to do.

Jamie and Kemel had reached the end of the corridor they had been traversing. A short cross-passageway led them into another corridor running parallel to the other. This one, however, was illuminated with low-level lighting and lacked windows. It was clearly the main passage for the south wing. The one Jamie and Kemel had been using was obviously a secondary passageway.

The two men halted and peered carefully out of the gloomy recess into the corridor. Jamie stared and Kemel was almost slack jawed at what they saw. A Dalek moved slowly down the corridor away from them.

‘So the Doctor was right,’ Jamie breathed. The mechanical beastie looked exactly like the illustrations he’d seen in the book in the

TARDIS. There was no mistaking the shape. ‘There are Daleks in the house.’ He looked at Kemel, who was ,still staring in shock at the retreating form. ‘Don’t worry about them, Kemel. Well, unless they catch sight of us,’ he amended. He knew that the Daleks were very dangerous. Still, how bright could one of those tin cans be? ‘It seems to be going in the right direction,’ he said to Kemel. The Turk nodded. Together they followed the Dalek carefully, keeping close to the side of the corridor.

The Dalek turned and vanished into a room ahead of them. Jamie pressed on a little faster, his left hand touching the wall as he pressed close to it. His fingers registered a change in the material – the thick wallpaper was broken by a small circle of glass. Alerted by the change, he glanced down. There was a low red glow from the glass, and he had a sudden bad feeling.

‘Down!’ he snapped, and threw himself backwards and to the floor. Kemel slammed to the boards beside him.

The ceiling opened up and a huge metal weight on a rod swung down. It whistled above their heads and through the spot where they had just been standing. If they had not moved, they would have been severely injured, if not killed. The weight swung in place, slowly coming to a stop.

‘Tricky little devils, aren’t they?’ muttered Jamie. He and Kemel moved past the huge weight, then continued on their way. By tacit agreement, they moved very slowly, one either side of the corridor.

In the monitoring room, the Doctor chuckled to himself as he set the new readings. This was proving to be a most fascinating experiment indeed. Jamie was showing a great deal of resourcefulness, and every last measure of it was being captured in detail by the Daleks’ devices.

The Dalek monitoring the Doctor moved forward slight. ‘We do not trust you,’ it stated. ‘What thoughts are you using now?’

Without looking round, the Doctor continued his fine tuning. ‘Human beings have five senses,’ he informed the Dalek. ‘Sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch.’ He knew that the Daleks had few biological senses, preferring to trust their mechanical devices for information. ‘But there is instinct, too,’ the Doctor added. ‘That’s a mental component of the senses, which compares information with experience. Sometimes it provides human beings with more data than they could possess using their five senses alone. Jamie used his instinct to avoid that last trap,

so I am programming instinct into the human factor.'

The Dalek considered the point. 'Proceed,' it finally grated.

'Thank you.' The Doctor set the silver recording wire in motion again, registering the latest information.

Jamie drew level with the door that the Dalek had entered earlier. It was still ajar. With their sucker-sticks instead of hands, they probably had trouble with door knobs, he supposed. It was easier to leave the doors open. Cautiously, he peered around the frame.

Beyond was a large, wood-panelled room. The ceiling was very high, and at the far end of the room was a minstrels' gallery. There was a large fireplace, now empty except for dust and dirt. This must have been some kind of banqueting hall back when the house was new, two or three hundred years earlier. Now it was completely without furnishings. The balcony of the minstrels' gallery was of finely carved oak, each panel separated by a vertical post that ended in a gargoyle's head decoration. Beyond the gallery was a large door that was closed.

In the main room, two Daleks waited. There was a click of machinery, and a spotlight flashed on, shining directly at the door leading to the balcony. There was the sound of a bell. A moment later, the door opened. Shielding her eyes from the glare of the lamp, Victoria stepped nervously out.

Gripping one of the carved heads, she peered down at her tormenters below.

Jamie felt like charging into the room and attacking the Daleks with his bare hands. Victoria was just as beautiful in person as he had guessed from the painting of her mother. But she was also exhausted, scared and pale. Rage began to rise, and he had to force himself to stay calm.

Charging in now would not help her, and would only serve to get him killed.

'Name?' the first Dalek demanded.

'Victoria,' the girl replied tiredly. This was obviously a routine she had been through several times.

'Louder!' the Dalek ordered.

‘Victoria!’ she said, and then shouted, her voice on the verge of breaking, ‘Victoria Waterfield! You know my name. Why do you make me stand here like this? What do you want of me?’

‘Silence,’ the Dalek grated.

‘Inspection is over,’ the second Dalek added. ‘Return to your room.’

With a sigh audible to Jamie, Victoria turned and slowly moved back into her room. The door closed behind her. A second later, the searchlight clicked off. The two Daleks turned to each other, apparently conferring silently.

Jamie looked at Kemel. ‘She’s very beautiful,’ he whispered. ‘We have to help her.’

Kemel grinned and nodded. He moved a little way back down the corridor, to where there was an antique mace in a bracket set on the wall. He pulled the mace down and returned to Jamie’s side, hefting it.

‘What are you going to use that for?’ asked Jamie. The Turk used it to point at the two Daleks. Jamie snorted and shook his head. ‘You won’t get near enough to use it,’ he said. ‘One of those two arms on the front is a kind of gun.

And if you did get to use it, you probably wouldn’t even dent the things, if what the Doctor has told me about these beasties is true. Better put it back.’ He reached out to take it from Kemel. The Turk released it. The mace was far heavier than it appeared; Kemel’s immense strength had made it look light; and Jamie was unprepared for the weight. It slipped through his fingers and fell towards the floor. Before it struck, Kemel plucked it up and set it back on its bracket.

Jamie studied the room again, desperately trying to come up with some idea of how to reach Victoria. There had to be some other way up to the minstrels’ gallery. He pulled out the folded map that Mollie had given him, hoping it might help. He discovered that the only other entrance to the gallery was a side door that had once led down to the lower level of the wing. According to the plan it had been bricked up a long time ago.

Frowning, Jamie wondered how the Daleks had managed to get Victoria into the room. Had they used a ladder, and forced her to climb it? They didn’t look as if they’d be agile enough to get up there.

Still, it was evident that the only way to Victoria now was through the banqueting room. How could he and Kemel get past them?

And, once past the Dalek guards, how could they get up to the gallery?

Kemel tapped Jamie on the arm, then pointed to himself. Then he gestured at the Daleks and made a chopping motion. Before Jamie could protest that an attack would be suicide, Kemel mimicked turning and running away.

'You want to attack the Daleks and run away?' guessed Jamie. Kemel nodded. Pointing to Jamie, he indicated the far side of the doorway, then pointed into the room beyond. 'Oh, I get it. You'll lure the Daleks away to let me slip into the room?' Kemel nodded, but Jamie shook his head firmly. 'No, that's too dangerous. I'll not let you be chased and caught or killed by the Daleks. Besides, even if I got into the room, I'd be no better off. We have to work out some way to get up from the floor to that balcony if we're to rescue Victoria.'

Kemel looked as if he was going to argue. Then he nodded, realizing that Jamie had a valid point. Together, they studied the problem: how to get up to the minstrels'

gallery and then get Victoria down again. There had to be some way to do it. There had to be.

The Doctor rubbed his chin thoughtfully, watching Jamie and Kemel on the small monitor. He could emphathize with their predicament, but there was no way that he could help them. The instruments continued to record Jamie's prodigious output of emotions.

'What is the significance of this thought-pattern?' the Dalek demanded.

'Suicidal attacks to gain an objective are stupid,' the Doctor explained. 'Jamie needs to achieve his goal without foolish risks.'

'Daleks are willing to take such risks.'

The Doctor looked back at his guard. 'I know; when they are ordered to do so. Some humans are willing to take these chances also. But Jamie and his new friend are determined to succeed. Getting to the girl is only a part of their mission. Getting her away again is quite another matter.'

19

Terrall's Agony

Mollie had done as Jamie had ordered, and locked herself in her room for safety. It was a small room, but a cheerful one. Not daring to undress and get ready for bed, Mollie had sat huddled by her window, waiting for the horrors of the night to strike. At any moment she expected to see some spectral form walk through the wall and come towards her. Shivering in fear, she clutched the oil lamp in her hand and waited.

Nothing happened. After that one scream, there were only the normal rustles and creaks of the house at night.

Gradually her fear began to fade and she began to feel ashamed of her foolishness and lack of courage. Young master Jamie had gone bravely to face ghosts, and she was sitting here in her room, shivering in terror, when he might be in desperate trouble. Mollie bit her lower lip, stricken by indecision. It really was not any of her business, was it, that he felt so foolishly brave? No one could blame her for not helping. Nobody but herself.

'Steady,' she muttered to herself. 'There's no sense in running about the house on some daft errand, is there?'

But she could not drive the feeling from her mind that Jamie was in trouble. 'It's been quiet for ages,' she told herself, trying to convince her conscience that there was nothing to worry about. It did not work. Her unease grew with each passing moment.

'Just a quick look,' she promised herself. 'Nothing more than that.' Clutching the lamp for protection, she unfastened her door and opened it timorously.

There was nothing out of the ordinary to be seen. The house was still and peaceful. With more courage now, she hurried back to the entrance to the south wing. As she passed the main hall, she noticed the door was ajar.

Pausing, she peered inside. Everything seemed in order.

She was about to go on when she heard a low grating sound.

It seemed to be coming from the large fireplace. Mollie's hand trembled as she clutched the edge of the door. There was a horrible,

inhuman tone in the sound, but she felt that she could almost make out words. Then, quite audible, although faint, she heard a voice she recognized. ‘Victoria!’

came the plaintive cry. ‘Victoria Waterfield!’

It was Miss Waterfield’s own voice, calling out her name! Mollie stood in the doorway, staring at the fireplace.

What was happening in this house? Surely there were no ghosts in the chimneys? And as far as she knew, Miss Waterfield was very much alive. Unless that story about her being in Paris was all made up, and someone had murdered her and hidden her away. Mr Terrall, perhaps?

He had been acting very strangely these past few weeks, flying into terrible tempers for no reason. Was he a mad murderer, suffering from the pangs of a remorseful conscience? Was that why he was so changeable?

Mollie fled down the hall in search of Jamie. She needed help, and somehow that nice young Scottish man seemed to be very trustworthy. As she passed the trophy room, a shape lunged at her from the shadows. One hand fastened on her arm, the other over her mouth. The scream in her throat was cut off before she could utter it. She struggled against the unknown assailant who dragged her backwards into the trophy room, then spun her about.

She backed into the door as the oil lamp was torn from her shaking fingers and held aloft. In its light she could clearly see Arthur Terrall, his face twisted in anger. Mollie almost fainted on the spot. He was a mad killer, and she was about to become his next victim.

‘What the blazes do you think you’re doing?’ he demanded, angrily. ‘Do you have any idea what time it is, Mollie?’

She tried to sink into the woodwork. ‘Don’t hurt me, sir,’ she begged.

‘What’s the matter with you?’ he snapped. ‘Stop snivelling like a child and start talking sense. What’s made you so frightened?’

‘I heard Miss Victoria, sir,’ she said timidly. ‘It was her voice, I swear it was. And I thought she was dead and haunting the house. There’s been some talk about ghosts, you see, and—’ Aware she was babbling, she clamped her mouth shut. Mr Terrall did not seem violent, but he did look very annoyed. Maybe she’d got it all twisted about in her

frightened mind.

‘What is all this hysterical nonsense?’ he asked her. He set the lamp down on one of the tables and turned the light up, illuminating the room.

With the shadows in retreat, Mollie felt a lot safer and rather foolish. There was a warm glow over the trophy cabinets and the guns, cups and swords within them glittered with points of flame. ‘It’s not nonsense, sir, I promise you,’ she replied. Her nerves were calming down now. ‘I did hear Miss Victoria’s voice. Truly I did.’

Terrall gave her a pitying glance. ‘And did she say how the weather is in Paris?’ he asked, coldly. ‘That is where she is, Mollie.’

‘I know that, sir.’ She fumbled for the right words to explain what had happened to her. ‘But I did hear her speaking.’

‘And where was that?’

‘Well, sir,’ she replied, ‘I was walking past the hall, and her voice sort of floated out of that big fireplace there.’ It sounded silly, even to her own ears.

Terrall did not look at all convinced. ‘Will you tell me how you can possibly hear Miss Waterfield’s voice when she is in Paris?’ he demanded.

‘Oh, I know that, sir,’ she agreed hastily. ‘I know it’s impossible and all, but I heard her, plain as anything.’

His eyes narrowed. ‘What were you doing in the hall at this time of the night?’ he snapped. ‘Why are you creeping about the house?’

Mollie swallowed. She could not tell him about helping Master Jamie to break into the south wing. ‘I wasn’t doing any harm, sir,’ she said, sniffling. ‘I promise.’ She wiped her nose on the back of her hand.

‘Then what are you doing in this part of the house at this hour?’ Terrall sounded as if he was losing his patience with her now.

‘I don’t know,’ she told him, tears welling up in her eyes. ‘Truly, sir, I don’t know.’

He took a step towards her. ‘You do know,’ he said grimly. ‘And you’re going to tell me.’

The door behind Mollie opened suddenly, and she squealed and jumped aside. Both of them stared at the new arrival.

Ruth Maxtible held up a lantern of her own. She was dressed in a linen night-gown, with a deep green dressing-gown wrapped tightly over it. Her hair was free and flowing, as if she had been brushing it ready for bed. She looked from Mollie to Terrall with a frown. 'Arthur?' she asked. 'What is going on? I heard voices.'

Terrall gestured at the maid. 'I found this child creeping about the corridors,' he informed her.

'I wasn't doing anything,' Mollie protested.

'You be quiet!' he snapped.

'Yes, sir,' she agreed meekly.

'She's miles away from her own room, I understand,'

Terrall continued. 'She should have been in her bed an hour since.'

Ruth looked at the young girl. 'Did you have extra work to do, Mollie?' she asked sympathetically.

Mollie grasped the excuse quickly. 'Yes, Miss Ruth,' she said eagerly. 'That's what I—'

'You're a little liar!' snarled Terrall, raising his hand menacingly. 'Miss Maxtible has just put the idea into your head.'

'I haven't done anything!' squealed Mollie, terrified she was about to be slapped. She cowered away from him, trying to hide behind Ruth. 'I haven't took nothing!

Honest!'

'Arthur,' Ruth said firmly. 'The poor child is frightened out of her wits.'

'It's nothing else but play-acting,' he growled, scowling furiously at the maid. 'She's a sly, cunning, snivelling little minx who is trying to lie her way out of trouble.'

'But I haven't done nothing, Miss,' Mollie insisted.

Tears were starting to trickle down her cheeks.

‘Go to the sitting room,’ Terrall ordered. ‘Wait there.

Mr Maxtible will decide what to do with you.’

‘But—’

‘Do as you are told!’ he thundered.

Mollie turned in mute appeal to Ruth, who nodded gently. ‘I think it’s best,’ she said. ‘Go along now. My father will be with you shortly.’ With a sob, Mollie fled the room. Ruth turned back to her fiancé, who seemed so cold and distant. Why had he been harassing the poor girl so badly over nothing? It must be because of his odd nervous condition. ‘Oh my dear,’ she said with feeling, ‘if we could only go away and forget this place and everything that has happened.’ He stared at her impassively. The only movement was the dancing light in his eyes from the two lamps. ‘Arthur, I have money.’

‘No,’ he snapped. Then, his shoulders slumping slightly, he turned his back to her. ‘No,’ he repeated, softer. ‘Not yet.’

She moved closer to him, reaching out a hand to comfort him. He sensed her movement and jerked away from her, backing against one of the trophy cases with the look of a hunted animal in his eye. Ruth felt her heart breaking inside her. ‘Why are you avoiding me?’ she asked.

‘I only wish to help you.’

‘There is nothing you can do for me,’ he replied darkly.

‘What is the matter?’ she asked. ‘Is it money? I have more than enough for the two of us, Arthur. My mother left it to me in her will. If it’s debts or—’

‘No,’ he said. ‘It is not money. I have no debts.’

‘Then what is it?’ she cried, frustrated. Finally, unable to bear his silence any longer, she gave vent to the gnawing suspicion that had been poisoning her mind for weeks. ‘Is it Victoria?’

‘What do you mean?’ He seemed genuinely puzzled by the question.

All of the jealousy and envy that had been building up inside of Ruth finally broke free. ‘Are you in love with her?’ she demanded. ‘Ever since she left for Paris you have acted so strangely. Is it because you’re

pining for her? Is that why you had her mother's portrait placed in the sitting room? Do you intend to throw me over for her?'

Terrall stared at her in evident confusion. 'No,' he said.

It is not that. I do not care for her, and my feelings towards you have not changed.'

Ruth felt almost giddy with relief. She had liked Victoria from the moment she had first met her, but terrible suspicions had been festering inside her, turning that fondness into hatred. Freed from her guilty thoughts, Ruth felt a great deal better. 'But you have changed,' she insisted. 'Whatever were you browbeating poor Mollie like that for?'

'Oh, she merely insisted that she had heard Victoria's disembodied voice,' he informed her. 'Another of those foolish ghost stories, of course.'

'We seem to do little but talk of Victoria,' Ruth snapped, her anger burning high again. Then, seeing his expression, she felt immediate contrition. 'No, that was unfair of me.'

She took a breath and forced herself to calm down. 'Is she really in Paris?'

'She is.' He stood aloof, staring down at her.

She could not bear this. As close as they stood, there seemed to be an ocean of some dark emotion between them. 'Arthur,' she begged. 'Tell me what is wrong.'

'Wrong?' he repeated coldly. 'Why should you think something is wrong?'

She cast about for any possibilities. If his problem was not money, or another woman, then there was only one place she could imagine to lay the blame. 'My father has influenced you in some way,' she said accusingly. She had seen the change that had come over Mr Waterfield under her father's influence. He had changed from a cheerful man without a care in the world to a haggard, nervous wreck; and at the same time that the changes had come over Arthur.

'Your father?' Terrall gave a strangled laugh. 'No, my dear, not your father.' He did not elaborate.

Ruth moved a pace closer. ‘Won’t you come away with me?’ she begged. ‘If we delay, I somehow feel that it will be too late.’

He stared at her and then shook his head. ‘No.’ His voice was hollow and broken. ‘No, I cannot go. Not yet.’

He stared past her, into the distance. ‘Not yet.’

Shuddering, Ruth wondered what terrible secret he was keeping from her. Whatever it was, it was haunting him.

And she felt an absolute conviction that if this malign spirit was not exorcised from his soul then it would destroy him, and perhaps her as well. But if she did not know what was eating at his soul, how could she possibly help him?

20

The Traitor

Maxtible stood at the small sink in the laboratory, washing his hands under the cold stream of water. His coat was thrown across a nearby stool, and his shirt-sleeves were rolled up above his elbows. Using the bar of heavy soap, he thoroughly cleaned his hands. His conscience was untroubled, and he was completely unaware of the irony of his actions. Every few moments he would cast a glance at the Dalek recording devices that were humming and flashing in the corner of the room, unattended.

Turning off the water, he dried his hands on the towel beside the sink, then dropped it back onto the bench.

Rolling down his sleeves, he slipped his cuff-links into place. As he picked up his jacket, the door to the mirror cabinet opened up and the Red Dalek glided out.

It regarded Maxtible as he pulled on his jacket. ‘You wished to speak to the Daleks?’ it finally asked.

Maxtible ignored it for a moment as he lit up a fresh cigar and took a long pull. Then he strode across the room to stand facing the Dalek. ‘Have I not done everything you asked of me?’ he demanded. His face was set, and he was determined this time that he would force the Daleks to keep their promise to him. The Red Dalek did not reply but its eyestick remained focused on his face. ‘You wanted an agent on Earth,’ he continued, ‘to plan and arrange things for you. I have been

that agent.' He poked at the machine with his cigar. 'Tell those who give you your orders that I am tired of waiting.' He moved to one of the stools and sat, waiting for the response.

The Dalek's eye followed him. 'Do you threaten the Daleks?'

'Threaten?' Maxtible spread his arms and smiled at the creature. 'But surely that isn't necessary. We have a partnership, an understanding.'

The Red Dalek began rocking back and forth in one spot. It seemed to be agitated, probably by his firmness, Maxtible believed. 'You have obeyed us,' it agreed.

'You have a curious way of phrasing things,' the financier commented. He blew a small cloud of smoke into the air. 'I prefer to say that you have asked for certain services and I have met each one, promptly and efficiently.'

He crossed his legs and stared at the Dalek. 'You really must see to your side of the bargain,' he said mildly. 'It is not beyond me to ruin this entire enterprise.'

The Red Dalek stopped rocking and rolled towards Maxtible. In a blur of movement, its arm rocketed out, the sucker attachment slamming with painful intensity into Maxtible's chest. With a cry of shock and rage, the burly man fell backwards from the stool, landing painfully on the floor.

Towering over him, the Dalek said, 'Do not threaten!'

Maxtible cowered away from it, expecting another blow.

He held one hand up to protect his face, and began to crawl away from the advancing creature. 'Your function is to obey,' it grated. The arm came out, not so hard, and pushed at him.

'Yes,' whimpered Maxtible, his arrogance shattered. He had not anticipated this reaction to his gentle threat. All he wanted was what was due him. There was no need for this, none at all. Why was he being treated like this? Did the Daleks not understand how essential his assistance was to them? The arm prodded him again. 'All right!' he howled.

'I understand!'

'Obey the Daleks,' the mechanical creature ordered.

Then it spun about and moved back towards the cabinet.

‘Wait!’ Maxtible cried, scrambling unsteadily to his feet.

‘Please.’ The Dalek stopped, but did not turn around or look back. Ignoring this obvious snub, Maxtible reached out a hand. ‘The secret.’ He begged. ‘You promised to tell me.’ He gestured about the room. ‘That is why I have done all of this.’

Slowly, the Red Dalek spun about to face Maxtible. ‘The Daleks know many secrets,’ it stated. ‘You will learn the most important.’ Then it completed its turn and trundled into the mirror cabinet. The door closed behind it, cutting off all further communication.

Staggering to a stool, Maxtible collapsed onto it. His cigar was a ruin, crushed when he had been pushed to the floor. He threw it in the direction of the nearest bin. ‘I must not be afraid of them,’ he whispered to himself, trying to rebuild his shattered nerves. ‘It is just their way.’

He took several deep breaths and forced himself to calm down. His ego had been bruised more severely than his body, but it rebounded well. Possessing the certainty of his own immense worth, Maxtible could not stay crushed by the rejection he had just been subjected to for very long.

‘They are different creatures,’ he reasoned. ‘Alien beings.

They do not understand yet how to relate to humans. That is why they need me; for my skills. Surely they must realize this, the ones who give the orders, at the very least.

They know that I am indispensable.’ Of course, that was it.

It was just this silly, red-painted creature that did not understand. It was probably some form of messenger, with ideas above its station. Those in charge of course understood his value, the services he had rendered. ‘They will tell me,’ he said softly. ‘Naturally they will.’

The door opened and Ruth came into the room. She was still dressed in her night clothes, and she appeared uneasy.

‘Father,’ she called.

Maxtible turned, his face livid. ‘I told you never to come in here!’ he thundered.

Shaken, Ruth halted in the doorway. ‘I had to,’ she replied, quietly but firmly.

‘Never!’ he yelled, getting to his feet. ‘Under any circumstances.’ What if the foolish girl had seen the Dalek? Didn’t she understand that his instructions were for her own protection?

‘Father,’ she insisted, ‘I simply had to. Will you please listen to me for once in your life? This is very important, or I would not have broken your rule.’

He took a deep breath and forced himself to keep an even voice. ‘Very well. What is it?’

Ruth glanced about the laboratory. Her eyes did not linger on any of the unfamiliar technical material. ‘I heard you speaking to someone,’ she said, puzzled.

‘I was rehearsing a speech to myself,’ he lied. ‘Waterfield and I are on the verge of a tremendous discovery that will change our lives.’

Ruth looked at him. ‘And Arthur is involved in some way?’ she asked sharply.

‘Ah, Arthur,’ Maxtible rumbled, beginning to understand the root of her agitation. ‘Yes.’

‘Why has he become so changed?’ Ruth demanded.

‘And where is Victoria Waterfield?’

Maxtible sighed. ‘My dear,’ he told her, ‘these are questions I cannot answer.’ As she opened her mouth to protest, he held up his hand. He could not trust her with the truth. She was a simple child, far too much like her late mother to be able to understand the complexities of his dealings with the Daleks. He liked to feel that he held her in great fondness in his heart. In truth, she was merely a burden to complicate his life. He was looking forward to the day when she finally wed Terrall so she would be off his hands, and Terrall’s problem. ‘One thing I will tell you,’ he said. ‘Then perhaps you will understand why there are secrets to be kept.’

On the bench in front of him was a small box. He opened it and removed a small misshapen lump of pig-iron from it. ‘Do you see this?’ he asked, holding it out.

She dismissed it with a glance. ‘What is it?’

‘An ordinary piece of metal,’ he replied. ‘Of very little value, would you agree?’

‘I suppose so.’ None of this was answering her questions and she could not conceal her imptience.

‘What does it weigh?’ her father mused. ‘Perhaps a few pounds. Five or six, shall we say?’ He smiled at her as he replaced the lump in the box. His eyes glittered as he looked up. He was dying to reveal his secret to someone, and Ruth was a perfect target when he felt the need to explain his motives. ‘For centuries, Ruth, men have searched for a secret. Some say it was known to the ancient alchemists. Others say that the secret never existed at all.

Still, the rumours, the stories and the search continue.’

‘What secret?’ Ruth stared at her father with some worry. He sounded almost fanatical now, not like his normal cold, withdrawn and disinterested self.

‘The transmutation of metal into gold,’ he breathed.

‘Metal into gold.’ He gave her a wide smile. ‘Do you understand a little now? To possess such a secret such as that would mean power and influence beyond imagination.’

Ruth shook her head slowly. ‘But you already possess more money than you can possibly spend, father,’ she protested. ‘Surely you have no need for more?’

‘You don’t understand, do you?’ Maxtible laughed contemptuously. ‘Like your mother. You were born into wealth, Ruth, and yet you have never understood its power.

With gold, I could buy kings and commoners. I can make or break men and government. Look at the Rothschilds.

They were mere nobodies until they brokered their money to create their financial empire. Now even kings and emperors dare not speak harshly to them. With the secret of transmutation, I could beggar the Rothschilds, and I am about to discover that secret. Nothing will stop me.

Nothing and nobody.’

Ruth stared at her father with horror. He had never cared for anything the way he had cared for his wealth. She had never deluded herself that he had any affection for her; he had married her mother because she had been a good connection for a man of high finance. He had shed no tears at her death, nor even spoken of her once in all the years following. His money had been all that he cared about; that and his strange obsessions with science. Now she could see even that was merely another tool to make him more money. Before, she had thought him merely obsessed with wealth. Now she finally understood that his soul had become possessed by his greed. All his remaining humanity, any of the finer emotions he might once have had, all were gone. His greed had consumed them and now held Theodore Maxtible firmly in its grip.

There was nothing that she would put past him now. It was clear that anything and anyone could and would be sacrificed to the terrible god of his greed.

What was to become of them all?

In the banqueting hall, the bell sounded again. The searchlight beam came on, illuminating the doorway on the minstrels' gallery. After a moment, it opened. Victoria; weary, dispirited and beyond pain; came slowly out.

'Name!' the first Dalek ordered. It looked up from the main hall below.

'Victoria!' she said, her voice shaking. 'Victoria Waterfield! Why do you torture me like this? Why won't you leave me alone?'

'Inspection is over,' the Dalek told her.

'Return to your room,' the second Dalek ordered. Her shoulders slumped with resignation, Victoria obeyed. As the door closed again, the light below died.

Jamie and Kemel were watching from the doorway. The young Scot could not understand the purpose of this ritual.

Was it merely to break their captive's spirit? He stiffened and flattened against the wall as one of the Daleks spun around and moved towards the door. He and Kemel quietly dodged into the shadows as the Dalek left the room. Without noticing them, it turned and moved off down the corridor. After a moment it turned, entered the cross-passage and vanished from sight.

Perfect. There was only one Dalek on guard now, and the two of them. Kemel held up the rope and raised an eyebrow. Jamie nodded his agreement, and took one end of the heavy cord. The Turk took the other. Together they slipped into the banqueting hall.

With the searchlight out, it was very dark in the room.

There were two small lamps on the balcony, whose light flickered as the oil burned. Below in the main hall, the shadows were deep and dark. Keeping well hidden, Jamie and Kemel moved away from the door in opposite directions, each paying out the rope as they went.

The floor was mercifully free of creaking boards, but some slight noise must have been picked up by the Dalek.

Its dome spun about, its eye-stick scanning the darkness.

Kemel had come prepared, having retrieved the ancient mace he had spotted earlier. With a flick of his wrist, he sent it clattering across the floor towards the far corner of the room. The Dalek responded instantly, spinning to centre on the noise, and it fired. The corner of the room was illuminated briefly in the burst of its ray.

In position now, Kemel and Jamie had both reached the ends of the rope. In the weird glow of the Dalek's fire, Jamie nodded at Kemel. Both men ran towards the Dalek, the rope stretched taut between them. The Dalek started to turn, but even it was not swift enough to react in time to this attack. The rope slammed into its mid-section, just below its arm and gun. The two men pulled hard as they ran, and the force sent the Dalek hurtling backwards into the great stone fireplace.

It collided with the back wall with a fearsome crash of metal. There was a small explosion, and electrical sparks and smoke began to issue from the shattered casing. The arm, gun and eye all drooped downwards. From the cracks in the metal a thick, pungent green slime began to drip.

'That's fixed that one,' Jamie said, with some satisfaction. That was some small payment for the pain and terror the Daleks were inflicting on the inhabitants of this house.

Kemel jerked on the rope and Jamie let go of his end.

The giant then ran to a position directly below the balcony.

Fashioning a loop from the rope, Kemel sized up his throw carefully, then sent the noose soaring. It settled neatly over one of the gargoyle's heads, and he pulled the rope tight.

There was a slight creaking from the post overhead, but it held firm. Kemel nodded to Jamie.

The young Scot gripped the rope and hauled himself upwards. The creaking from the post was louder as he gripped the edge of the balcony and pulled himself over it.

He glanced at the post, but it appeared to be firm. He looked over the rail and nodded to Kemel below.

The Turk gripped the rope and hauled himself up with ease. He was almost to the top when the post suddenly gave way, splintering and cracking as it shattered. Jamie reached out, gripping Kemel's arm and pulling him the last part of the way to the rail. The post broke through, and part of the rail lurched out drunkenly into the air. Thankfully it did not give way completely and go crashing to the floor below.

The noise might have brought other Daleks swarming to investigate.

'That was close,' Jamie muttered, and Kemel nodded.

He gave Jamie a grateful smile.

Neither of them saw the Dalek that entered the room below, keeping to the shadows.

Crossing to the door that opened onto the gallery, Jamie rapped quietly on it. 'Miss Waterfield?' he called, keeping his voice as low as possible. 'Can you open the door? We've come to help you.'

Kemel glanced back and saw movement. He tapped Jamie urgently on the shoulder. Both of them stared over the balcony into the hall below. The Dalek was now moving towards the centre of the room, its gun rising to be fired. Both of them ducked behind the rail, seeking what cover it afforded them.

The door to Victoria's room swung open. Instead of the young girl, it was another Dalek that emerged, its gun moving to fire at the two men.

Fencing

The reason for the Daleks making her call out her name periodically had become clear to Victoria: it had been the bait in a trap. And now her mute friend Kemel and some young stranger had been caught by the Daleks. She could do nothing but watch as they were murdered.

Kemel and the stranger were crouched by the balcony rail. The two men exchanged glances, their hands on the rope that they must have used to climb up this far. To Victoria's amazement, she saw neither terror nor resignation in either man's expression. Instead, they looked grimly determined. Perhaps they were not aware of the power of the Daleks? Victoria wanted to cry out and warn them, but she was as unable to shout as Kemel himself.

The two men hauled on the rope together, staying low.

There was undoubtedly another Dalek in the room below that they were sheltering from. But the one in front of them was surely the greater danger. It was preparing to fire as Kemel and his friend threw the long loop of rope they had gathered. It circled the Dalek, and they instantly pulled the rope as tight as they could.

The forward motion of the Dalek was suddenly tripled.

It shot out of the doorway, completely unable to control its velocity. The two men released the rope and dived aside as Victoria looked on the scene with wonder.

The Dalek smashed into the sagging railing. For a second it seemed to hover on the brink of the drop, as the railing shattered and fell in a wooden shower to the banqueting hall below. Then the Dalek toppled and followed the railing. It slammed into the wooden floor, and in a blaze of flame and metal that fountained upward, was totally destroyed.

'Quick,' the stranger said. Even over the ringing in her ears produced by the explosion, Victoria could hear the Scottish burr in his words. 'Before we run into any more of these mechanical beasties – inside!'

Kemel needed no further urging. The two men dashed into the room and slammed the door behind them.

Outside, the rise and fall of a klaxon sounded as the Daleks raised the alarm. The young stranger slammed home the bolts to fasten the door, but it was clear that they would not stop the Daleks if they attacked.

He and the giant Turk looked around the room.

Victoria felt a wave of relief wash over her. She might still be a prisoner of these evil alien monsters, but at least she was no longer alone. The lumber room in which the Daleks had left her was cluttered with old boxes and chests filled with clothing and bric-a-brac. Some of it belonged to her father and herself, so she had managed to change into fresh clothing. The rest belonged to the Maxtible household. She had set up a rough bed between the boxes, using her thin blanket and others she had scavenged from the trunks. There was only her water jug and tin mug for decoration. It had been terribly depressing just moments ago, but now her heart felt much lighter.

'Kemel,' she said, smiling happily. 'My dear friend.'

The Turk returned a smile just as warming, then went to one knee and kissed her hand in greeting. They might still be in a perilous position, but Victoria was reassured by having Kennel so near.

The younger man nodded. 'Aye, he's a good friend right enough, Miss Waterfield.'

She looked at the Scot with interest. 'And you?' she asked.

'Introductions in a moment, if you'll forgive me,' he replied. 'I'd like to make us a bit more secure first.' He looked around and his eyes fastened on a large captain's trunk. Gripping it by one handle, he started to drag it across the floor towards the door.

Kemel stepped in his way, and shook his head slightly.

Then he bent and picked up the immense trunk. His muscles bulged but he showed little strain as he lowered it across the bottom half of the door.

The stranger shook his head ruefully. 'We'll do with another on top of that too, I'm thinking,' he said. Kemel nodded and picked up a second trunk. With as little effort as before, he piled it a top the first, then gave the trunks a shake. Seeing that they did not wobble, he nodded in satisfaction.

Moving carefully, the young man circled the room, examining the blank walls and the floor, and looking behind boxes and discarded items of furniture. Finally he ended up beside Victoria and Kemel once again and sighed. 'Well,' he muttered. 'They can't get in, but we can't get out. I don't know where that puts us.' Reaching into his shirt, he

drew out a small handkerchief that Victoria instantly recognized as her own. ‘My name’s Jamie McCrimmon,’ he said, holding out the square of cloth. ‘I came to give you this.’

Taking the handkerchief, Victoria smiled at the young man. He looked to be both determined and resourceful.

And rather good looking, too, if she was honest. She had a feeling that they were going to become good friends.

The Doctor straightened up with a yawn and a sigh. He stretched his arms, then looked back at the Dalek behind him. ‘It appears that Jamie has eluded your forces,’ he said, puckishly.

‘The humans will be caught,’ the Dalek stated with utter conviction.

‘But not for a little while,’ the Doctor said, gesturing to the small viewing screen on which he had been following the action. ‘So this would probably be a good time for me to take a break.’

‘You are to operate the machinery here,’ the Dalek informed him. ‘Obey.’

The Doctor jumped to his feet, aware that the Dalek’s gun was now trained on him. ‘Daleks can operate without rest,’ he said mildly, ‘but human beings cannot. They need to stretch their legs, to eat and drink. At the moment, Jamie is just getting to know Victoria. It will be a while before anything happens. When it does, there will be plenty of work for me to do. If you want me to be in tip-top shape to do it, I need to take a short rest.’

The Dalek considered the request. After a moment, the gun lowered. ‘Humans are weak,’ it said. ‘Your need for sustenance and periods of unconsciousness are known to us. Very well. You are permitted one Earth hour for your needs. Nourishment has been provided for you in the third room from here.’ It stared at the Doctor. ‘Do not fail to return at the appointed time.’

‘Believe me,’ the Doctor said earnestly. ‘I would not miss the end of this experiment for anything.’ He was extremely pleased with two things: that the Dalek was not going to be accompanying him; and that it had believed his little lie.

He was under no illusion that he would not be watched, as he walked carefully to the room that the Daleks had indicated. He found himself in the Trophy Room, and looked about it with interest. The glass cases

of awards were most revealing, as were the well-stocked gun cabinets.

He did not really expect to find any, but he made a quick search for ammunition. The Daleks were not that foolish, and he found that the drawers where the cartridges would have been kept were empty. Not that a sporting rifle could do much danger to a Dalek, but those malevolent beings took no chances. There were swords and even a couple of suits of armour. There were several battleaxes and a couple of flails and maces. None of them would do more than scrape the paint off a Dalek casing.

On a low table in the centre of the room he found a large platter of roast beef, a fresh loaf and a small pot of butter.

Beside it was a decanter filled with wine and several glasses. He cut himself several thick slabs of bread and made up two hearty sandwiches. There was no telling when he would get a chance to eat again, so it was best to stock up now. He helped himself to a glass of the red wine and tasted it, to discover that it was a rather full-bodied and most pleasant Marsala. Sitting in one of the tall wing-backed chairs in the room, he munched and sipped quietly for a while.

He had finished his sandwiches and was pouring himself a second glass of the excellent Marsala when the door opened. A young man entered the room and inclined his head slightly.

'Mr Arthur Terrall, I presume?' the Doctor said, grinning maniacally. 'I'm so very pleased to meet you formally at last. I've heard quite a lot about you, you know.'

He gestured to the wine. 'Would you care to join me in a glass of this rather cheeky little wine?'

No.'

'Oh well.' The Doctor replaced the stopper in the bottle and sipped his own.

'I very rarely touch it,' Terrall added, by way of explanation.

'Indeed,' the Doctor said. He gestured at the platter.

'Something else, then? The beef is really delicious, you know.'

'No,' Terrall replied. As an afterthought, he added,

‘Thank you.’

‘A little of this very nice bread, then?’ asked the Doctor.

Terrall stared at him. ‘You seem determined to involve me.’

‘Yes I do, don’t I?’ The Doctor gave him another wide grin.

‘The house is a large one,’ Terrall said. ‘I prefer my own company.’ He showed no inclination to leave, however.

‘How very unsociable,’ commented the Doctor.

Possibly.’ The young man didn’t seem at all bothered.

‘But I dare say you would enjoy your libation in one of the other rooms.’

Interesting. If Terrall was the Dalek’s agent here, surely he would want to keep the Doctor where he could be watched? Or did he have some other reason for being in this particular room? In either case, the Doctor had absolutely no intention of leaving yet. He still had time before the Daleks demanded his return. ‘No, I’m quite happy, thank you. Quite happy.’ He started to aimlessly wander about the room, peering into the cases at the trophies they contained. ‘Fascinating collection,’ he observed. Then, with a contrite expression on his face, he looked at Terrall. ‘Oh, but I forgot you’re not in the mood for talk.’

Terrall stared at him coldly. ‘I thought you were helping Maxtible and Waterfield with their experiment.’

‘I am.’ The Doctor took another sip of wine. ‘I’m enjoying a little rest. Besides, I wanted to talk to you.’

‘About what, pray?’ Terrall seemed rather bored.

‘About you, Mr Terrall,’ the Doctor said softly. He stopped moving about the room, and stood beside a display of knives and daggers. ‘You interest me. Do you know something? Ever since I came to this house . . .’ His voice trailed off as he bent to examine the knives more closely.

‘What?’ prompted Terrall.

‘Extraordinary’ the Doctor observed, tapping the glass case. ‘Circassian, I shouldn’t wonder. You don’t see too many of those around.’

‘Do I know what?’ persisted Terrall.

‘What?’ The Doctor looked confused, and then smiled.

‘Ah, yes. You haven’t been known to take any meals.’ He bent to study the knives again. ‘That’s very curious, isn’t it?’ He turned his head and watched the young man sideways.

‘I dine alone,’ Terrall replied.

‘Do you know, that had occurred to me.’ The Doctor beamed at him. ‘So I talked to Waterfield. He’s been here a lot longer than I have, after all. And do you know, it’s really most extraordinary, he can’t remember ever seeing you eat or drink. Not as much as a sip of water.’

Still without any expression, Terrall crossed to one of the racks of rapiers on the wall. He took down a foil and removed the guard from the point. Then he tested the weapon for spring. It sang as it bowed in his hands.

Turning back to face the Doctor, he said, ‘You seem to be a devotee of Edgar Allen Poe, Doctor.’

‘Do I?’ The Doctor shrugged casually. He glanced at one of the fencing trophies on a rack. ‘Extraordinary thing,’ he commented. ‘This has Mr Waterfield’s name engraved upon it.’

Terrall swished the rapier through the air. ‘I see nothing in that.’

‘Don’t you?’ The Doctor gestured about the room. ‘Mr Maxtible’s house seems to be full of things belonging to his employee. Trophies. Paintings. Swords.’

Making a figure S in the air with the tip of the foil, Terrall ended it facing the Doctor. ‘Your talent for curiosity knows no bounds, Doctor,’ he observed.

‘Yes, I do ask questions, don’t I?’ The Doctor gave another of his michievous smiles. ‘It’s a terrible habit,’ he confessed. ‘And, do you know, I always get so suspicious when I don’t get answers.’

‘There is no mystery,’ the young man said indifferently.

‘Mr Waterfield became bankrupt. Maxtible bought up many of his belongings.’

‘What a benevolent thing to do,’ the Doctor commented.

‘You may imagine how it is with inventors, Doctor,’

Terrall continued. ‘So busy with their experiments that they leave their bills unpaid.’

The Doctor nodded wisely. ‘And what happens then, I wonder?’ He steepled his hands and stared at the ceiling, as if seeking inspiration. ‘Does someone come along, buy up all the bills and make poor Waterfield bankrupt?’

‘I cannot believe that anyone would do that deliberately,’ Terrall said.

‘Unless there was a very good reason, Mr Terrall.’ The Doctor smiled. ‘A rich man doesn’t need a benefactor. A bankrupt does. And Waterfield was quite wealthy once, wasn’t he? A man who wins trophies for fencing and who engages an artist to paint his wife’s portrait is no pauper.

And I doubt he’d forget to pay his bills. Tradesmen do tend to bother you if you don’t pay them.’ He gestured about the room. ‘And here he is now, with all his things about him. As if it were planned that way, eh?’

‘It isn’t wise to make assumptions,’ Terrall said coldly.

He whipped the rapier about, making a pass several inches from the Doctor’s chest. ‘Nor to meddle in affairs that are none of your business.’ He let his hand rest on a sideboard, as if to lay the sword down.

‘Just a moment,’ the Doctor said forcefully. Surprised, Terrall froze in place, as if the Doctor’s order had triggered a reflex to obey. The Doctor lifted the trophy and touched it to the end of the sword. The point rose to meet the cup.

‘Amazing,’ he said. ‘An ordinary sword, Mr Terrall, and yet it appears to be magnetic.’

The young man let go of the rapier and stepped away.

The point of the weapon clattered to the polished wooden surface.

Replacing the cup, the Doctor grinned up at Terrall.

‘And yet as soon as you let go, it loses its magnetism.’ He chewed on his thumb-nail for a moment, watching his opponent carefully. ‘If I

didn't know any better, I'd say you were full of some kind of electricity, Mr Terrall.' The young man showed some emotion finally. He grimaced and then glared angrily at the Doctor.

At that moment, the door opened. Waterfield entered, his expression apologetic. 'Doctor,' he said, unaware of the tension in the room. 'You're wanted.' There was no need for him to explain who by.

'Of course,' the Doctor said. He nodded to both men.

'Excuse me.' As he reached the door, Terrall called,

'Doctor!' The Doctor looked back.

'No doubt you are a keen student of human nature,'

Terrall said coldly. 'But some things are better left alone.'

The Doctor shook his head. 'No, Mr Terrall, I am not a student of human nature. I am a professor of a much wider academy, of which the human being is merely a part.' He peered through his thick fringe. 'All forms of life interest me.' With a nod, he left the room. A puzzled expression on his face, Waterfield accompanied him.

When the door closed, Terrall turned to stare at the half-empty glass of wine that the Doctor had left behind.

As that strange man had said, it did look very good. Terrall could not remember when he had last tasted a glass. But then, there was a lot he couldn't remember at present.

Was the Doctor right? Had he indeed not been eating or drinking? But that was impossible, wasn't it? If he wasn't getting the energy to live from food and drink, then how was he still alive? The Doctor had to be wrong; he had to be. And there was a simple way to prove it.

He crossed to the wine decanter, removed the stopper, poured himself a half-glass of wine and set the decanter down. Raising the glass, he stared into the rich redness of the drink. Reflections from the lamps in the room sparkled from the crystal glass. It looked very inviting indeed. All he had to do was to sip it. That would prove the Doctor was just talking nonsense, wouldn't it? All he had to do was to take a single sip.

He started to bring the glass to his lips. Then the air seemed to grow thick. His hand slowed, then stopped. He stared at the glass

desperately. It was only six inches from his lips. He tried to bring it the rest of the way, but his hand would not obey. His muscles spasmed, and his hand trembled under the strain. Ignoring the thundering in his head, he tried to focus on the simple act of bringing the glass to his lips. His hand started to shake violently, and sweat poured down his forehead. The wine sloshed about in the glass as he trembled violently. He had to do it – he had to!

Then the wine slipped onto his skin. It was as if he had placed his hands in the mouth of a serpent. Sharp, terrible pains lanced through his flesh. With a cry of shock and pain, he let the glass fall. He did not notice if it rolled or shattered. His hand fell as if it had been dipped in acid.

Snatching up the napkin from the platter, he hurriedly wiped off the wine. The pain lessened. It would have been a relief, but now he was more aware of the other asaults on his senses. Voices in his head thundered, beating at his consciousness. His eyesight was fading into blackness and a whirling miasma that sucked at his soul.

'Obey!' the voices commanded. 'Obey! Obey!'

With a shriek of agony, Terrall sank to his knees.

Throwing his head back, he pressed his hands to his ears, trying to drown out the mechanical voices. It was no use.

He whimpered and writhed as pain filled his last vestiges of consciousness.

'Obey! Obey! Obey!'

22

Pawns Of The Daleks

In the lumber room Jamie sat on an old sea chest, sipping water from Victoria's battered tin cup. The water was cold, and felt good. He had not realized how parched he was until she had offered him and Kemel a drink. Jamie had insisted that Kemel go first 'to keep your strength up', which had greatly amused the Turk. He was now sitting with his eyes closed by the door, apparently resting. Jamie was certain that the giant was actually paying careful attention for any sound from outside.

Victoria was seated on her makeshift bed, listening to Jamie as the

young Scot told how he and the Doctor had arrived at Maxtible's house. To his surprise she did not balk at the concept of time travel when he had told her that he was originally from the Jacobite era, and that he and the Doctor had been trapped in 1966.

'My father was experimenting with travelling through the barriers of time,' she explained. 'It seems only reasonable that some other travellers through the ages might find their way here. After all, the Daleks did.'

'Aye,' agreed Jamie. 'And they were the ones who had the Doctor and myself brought to the house.'

Victoria nodded to signify her understanding. 'But why did you risk your life to try and rescue me?' she asked.

Jamie gave her a hesitant smile. 'Would you like some of this water?' he asked, offering her the cup.

'You are too modest,' Victoria said with a smile. She refused the cup. 'It was a silly question.'

She was even more beautiful in person than the painting had led Jamie to believe, and he had discovered that she was as pleasant and friendly as she was pretty. Jamie's resolve to free her from the Daleks, at whatever cost to himself, intensified. 'How did they capture you in the first place?' he asked.

Her forehead creased with a slight frown. 'I don't remember,' she replied. 'And yet . . . Yet I seem to remember. At the back of my mind.' She concentrated her thoughts. 'Somebody, I can't recall who it was ... There was somebody telling me to walk. And I obeyed blindly.

Without question.'

'Were you drugged, perhaps?' suggested Jamie.

'I simply don't know.' Victoria smoothed out her dress, and turned haunted eyes on him. 'The first real memory of these events I have is waking up in a bare room with one of those terrible, terrible things.' She swallowed.

'And what do you remember before that?' Jamie urged.

'Apart from this hazy recollection?'

‘I was reading in the sitting room.’ She shook her head.

‘I couldn’t concentrate because I was so worried about Papa. He and Mr Maxtible had worked so hard on their experiments. They had both seemed so cheerful, so confident of success. Then Papa had come to me. He looked so broken, so distraught. He told me only that his experiment had failed, and tragically at that. He refused to allow me to comfort him and left. I thought about what I could do to help and then,’ she sighed, ‘I think I must have fallen asleep over my book. Now I know why he was so despondent. He had met those evil creatures.’

Jamie nodded. ‘You see, how you came to be in the power of the Daleks is very important. They can’t have done as much as they have without help.’

‘Help?’ Victoria looked stunned. ‘From someone in the house?’

‘Aye, Jamie replied grimly. ‘They’ve established themselves all too well in the sealed-off wing. They knew how your voice would carry. They knew how to stay hidden from the everyday running of the place. There must be someone in this house who wants them to succeed in their plans. Someone who drugged you, maybe, or found some other way to put you into the power of the Daleks.’

‘But who?’ exclaimed Victoria. ‘Who, having seen their evil, would ever work with them? And how could that person have drugged me? How come it have been done without my knowing?’

Jamie shrugged. He could not tell this lovely young girl that he suspected her father. She doted on the man. But Waterfield had plotted their abduction, and he had somehow managed to convince the Doctor to join in helping him. Victoria had admitted that he was the last person she recalled seeing before she fell into the clutches of the Daleks. And he could have drugged her easily. He had the knowledge, and poor innocent Victoria would never have suspected her father of such a vile deed. But there was no way that Jamie could mention his belief without strong proof. She would never listen to him otherwise.

Mollie had reluctantly gone to the sitting room as Arthur Terrall had ordered her. She had stayed there almost an hour, fearing the wrath of Mr Maxtible. Her employer had a temper as large as his confidence in himself at times.

Mollie had been subject to his scorn and bitter words at times in the

past over slight infringements of her duties.

Now, urged on by Mr Terrall, she feared the worst. If she was sacked, where would she go? Who would hire her again? Mr Maxtible had many friends, all terribly powerful people. She might as well just throw herself off a bridge somewhere and drown. It would be a quicker but not less certain a death as being fired. Her mind reeled as she contemplated her fate.

Then the door opened, but it was Terrall again, not the master. Glancing at her coldly, he said, 'Follow me.'

Nervously, she did so. He led her to the Trophy Room, where Mr Maxtible was waiting, seated in a wing chair, and playing with an object dangling from his golden watch chain.

To her surprise, he looked up with a smile in his eyes.

'Come in, Mollie, come in.' He beckoned her over. As he did so, he turned up the wick in the oil lamp beside him. It was the only light in the room, and cast a warm glow over the place. Then he looked up and saw her strained face.

'Mollie, there's no cause for alarm,' he told her gently. 'You are in no trouble, believe me.'

Mollie cast a glance back at Terrall. 'But I thought—'

Maxtible chuckled softly into his beard. 'Between you and me, Mollie,' he said in quiet, confidential tones, 'Mr Terrall has been a little – unusual, shall we say? – of late.

Pay him no mind.'

Sighing with relief, Mollie relaxed finally. She was still safe. Maxtible nodded encouragingly, then held up the item on the chain.

It was a large gem of some kind. The light from the lamp behind it sparkled and gleamed. The patterns it cast danced prettily across her face. 'What do you think of this, Mollie?' he asked her.

'It's very pretty, sir,' she replied.

'Take a closer look,' he urged her. The jewel was spinning in his fingers, and swaying on the chain. The maid obediently bent to stare into the shining facets of the gem. He allowed it to swing a little

wider. ‘Keep your eyes fixed firmly on the jewel, Mollie,’ he said softly.

‘Concentrate your attention upon the lights. They’re very pretty, aren’t they?’

‘Very pretty,’ she agreed, her eyes transfixed by the shimmering colours that danced across her face. Her pupils started to dilate as she stared unblinkingly at the light.

‘You are paying attention, Mollie?’ asked Maxtible softly.

‘Yes, sir,’ she said, her voice light and dreamy.

Maxtible smiled, like a lion sighting its prey. ‘Keep your eyes fixed on the jewel,’ he whispered. ‘See how the light catches it. Every facet sparkles, does it not, Mollie?’

Eyes firmly fixed on the swaying, spinning jewel, Mollie replied, ‘Yes, sir.’

‘Flashing,’ Maxtible repeated. ‘Flashing. Like a collection of sparks. I know you are tired, Mollie. You are tired, are you not? Tell me.’

Mollie murmured. ‘I am tired.’

‘Then close your eyes and sleep,’ Maxtible suggested. ‘It is perfectly safe, my child. A heavy sleep.’ His voice went softer still. ‘You are so exhausted. You need have no fear.

Sleep, Mollie, sleep.’ He smiled again as Mollie closed her eyes. He leaned forward, the jewel still dancing in his hand. ‘But as you sleep, you hear my voice only.’

Mollie stood, eyes closed, the lights playing over her skin. ‘I only hear your voice,’ she agreed.

‘Mollie,’ Maxtible said in firmer tones, ‘you have been dreaming. Dreaming that there are mysteries in this house.

That all is not well. You have dreamed that you heard Miss Victoria’s voice, but it is all in your imagination.’ He stared intently at her. ‘Nothing but a dream, Mollie. Do you understand?’

After a moment, Mollie murmured, ‘Nothing but a dream.’

‘That is correct,’ said Maxtible. ‘Now when I tell you to open your

eyes, the dream will fade. You will remember none of these suspicions. They might be injurious to your health. After all, they were only a dream. When I tell you to open your eyes, you will go to your room. Once you are there, you will fall asleep naturally. When you waken, everything that we have spoken about will be just a wisp of a dream.' He snatched the jewel out of the air and clenched it firmly in his fist. 'Now open your eyes.'

Mollie's eyes snapped open, but they were blank and unseeing, as if she were still asleep. Without a word, she turned and left the room. Maxtible and Terrall heard her footsteps retreating down the corridor. The younger man turned to Maxtible.

'A good subject,' he said. 'I had no idea that mesmerism was one of your accomplishments.'

Returning the jewel to his waistcoat packet, Maxtible raised an eyebrow. 'How else do you imagine I persuaded Victoria to go to the Daleks?'

'I see.' Terrall looked tired, his eyes red-rimmed. 'And what of the experiment?'

'It progresses.' Maxtible removed a cigar from a conveniently placed box and lit it.

'Are you sure of the Doctor?' enquired Terrall, his voice brittle.

'No,' Maxtible admitted candidly. He blew out a smoke ring. 'But he is watched.'

Terrall nodded slightly. 'And Waterfield?'

The financier scowled. 'His usefulness is nearing its end,' he said darkly. 'Your intervention in the stables was untimely.' He turned away, his mind now on other matters.

Behind his back, Terrall stumbled suddenly. A raging pain dug fingers of fire into his mind. 'Maxtible!' he gasped, pitching forward. He clutched the edge of a cabinet for support, shaking it almost down upon himself.

'Maxtible, help me,' he begged.

Maxtible spun about, his eyes wide. 'What do you mean?' he asked, cautiously.

His face twisted in agony, his eyes brimming with tears, Terrall held out his hand. His fingers were twisted into a claw from the spasms in his muscles. ‘I am in the grip of something,’ he gasped. Maxtible backed away a pace.

‘Sometimes my thoughts are clear. Sometimes muddled. I don’t . . .’ he clutched his temples, his eyes screwed shut, as he fought the terrible pain. ‘I don’t understand what has happened to me.’ He opened his eyes, and appealed, ‘Help me!’

Maxtible shook his head slightly. ‘I can only help you if you obey me.’

Terrall cried out as his head throbbed again and again.

A grim, mechanical voice seemed to be howling in his brain. ‘But . . . obey . . . our masters!’ he managed to gasp out. He was losing the battle to remain in control of any part of his mind. These attacks were coming more frequently and much worse with every bout.

‘I prefer to say our colleagues,’ Maxtible responded smugly. ‘And it is their wish that you obey me. Do you understand?’

‘Yes!’ Terrall cried. ‘Yes! I must obey.’ Even as he spoke, the agony seemed to recede slightly. He managed to straighten up again. His breathing finally returned to normal, and he could see without a haze passing over his vision. Even over his promise to obey, there was a thought strongly in his mind. ‘They will decide when Waterfield is to be disposed of. Remember that.’

‘Oh, I do, I do,’ Maxtible said, with a gesture signifying that the matter was not important.

‘But you would have killed him in the stables if I had not stopped you,’ Terrall pointed out. He distrusted Maxtible’s sudden acquiescence.

‘A little misunderstanding on the part of our friends,’

the financier informed him. ‘Now, it is your turn to obey. I have a task for you to perform.’ He crossed to the near wall of the Trophy Room. There he pressed a device in one of the shields that hung on the wall. With a sigh, a panel below it opened up. Beyond it was darkness. Maxtible turned to beckon Terrall forward. ‘This secret passageway leads to the south wing. It is one of the many secrets of this house that only I know. At the end of this passage is a similar door into a certain room. There you will find Victoria Waterfield. Bring her to me.’

‘Maxtible!’ protested Terrall. ‘Our masters need her for the testing.’

‘The testing will be completed by the time that you arrive,’ Maxtible said soothingly. ‘Besides, she has been taken from the Daleks by Kemel and the Doctor’s friend.

It is up to us to return her to their power. It is they who need your help, not I.’ He glared at Terrall. ‘Do as you are told.’

Before Terrall could protest again, there came in strong, clear tones he could not resist: ‘Obey! Obey! Obey!’ The fight went out of him and his shoulders slumped.

‘Well?’ Maxtible indicated the panel. Terrall did not hesitate again. He stepped inside the passageway. Maxtible tapped the hidden mechanism again and the panel swung closed.

Staring at the wall, Maxtible gently puffed away on his cigar. Our masters, he thought, contemptuously. They were like any of a hundred powerful people Maxtible had come up against during the making of his financial empire.

As long as they had the advantage, they gave the orders.

But when you had something they needed, they learned to take the orders. At the moment, they were in control. They still had the secret of transmutation that Maxtible craved.

But that poor fool Terrall would soon help him to turn the tide. Once Victoria was brought here, Maxtible would have something that the Daleks needed. And if they wanted her ever back in their power again, they would have to give him the secret first.

It was all a matter of planning, really. And he had now out-schemed the Daleks. In a short while, he would be the undisputed master here.

23

The Human Factor

Waterfield entered the laboratory looking tired and defeated. He had tried to rest, but it had been no use. The second his eyes closed, he started to see vivid images of the things that had happened in the recent past, and to hear accusing voices. Toby and Kennedy both accused him of murder; Victoria accused him of abandoning her; his wife accused him of letting her down; and everyone else accused him

of betraying the human race to the Daleks.

Too terrified of his nightmares to sleep, Waterfield had returned like a fictional murderer to the scene of his greatest crimes. Here he had helped Maxtible to construct the mirror cabinet, that infernal device that had opened the doorway to Earth for the Daleks.

The Doctor was at one of the benches, working away with equipment that the Daleks had provided. Waterfield shuddered as he saw the technologically sophisticated devices those evil monsters had brought along. Once he would have been burning to take them apart and ferret out their inmost secrets. Now, all he wanted to do was to smash the lot into a million pieces. Crossing to the bench, he peered over the Doctor's shoulder.

The strange little man was working on one of three identical glass and metal capsules. Each was about two inches long and a half-inch thick. They had small electrodes poking out of both ends, and a coupling device on one side. Leaning forward for a closer look, Waterfield asked, 'Is it finished?'

'Very nearly,' the Doctor answered. He had a jeweller's eyeglass screwed into his left eye as he made the finishing touches to the minute circuitry inside the final capsule.

'Jamie was magnificent, but then I knew he would be. He produced a battery of the finest human emotions, each one of which was captured and imprinted on wire.' Using a small screwdriver, he pointed to a thin strand of silver wire set at the heart of the tiny device. 'Here, see?' He closed the cover and placed the third one beside the first two.

'The human factor,' Waterfield said softly.

'Well, a part of it at least,' the Doctor amended. 'The better part. Courage, ingenuity, pity, instinct, chivalry, friendship, compassion.' He smiled. 'A few of the virtues.'

'And all in there?' asked Waterfield, staring at the small units.

'Yes,' replied the Doctor. 'It's a minute positronic brain.

We shall implant one of these into each of the three dormant Daleks.' He gestured across at the packing cases.

'So,' Waterfield mused slowly, 'the end is in sight.'

‘Perhaps.’ The Doctor sounded rather pensive. He rose to his feet and crossed to the closest of the cases. He threw back the lid and smacked the release mechanism for the case. The front of the box flew out, forming a ramp to the floor. The Dalek inside stood still, dormant until the correct signals were fed into its onboard computers to bring the nutrients up to full life-support. Then the Dalek would waken. The embryo within would draw memory and information from the computers in the travel device and it would then become a full Dalek.

Waterfield stared at his own distorted reflection in the polished grey dome of the machine. ‘What will happen when this capsule you have prepared comes into contact with the brain of the Dalek and starts to influence it?’

The Doctor’s eyes sparkled as he considered the thought. His fingers drummed happily on the dome of the Dalek. ‘Maybe it’ll drive them insane,’ he suggested impishly.

Wishing he could believe that and not the voices accusing him in the far reaches of his mind, Waterfield shook his head. ‘Or turn them into superior creatures?’ he suggested, haunted by the notion.

‘Well, that’s their purpose,’ the Doctor answered in a rather offhand manner. He stared at the dormant Dalek, lost in his own thoughts. ‘At least, I suppose it is. But I can’t help feeling there’s more to all this than meets the eye.’ He turned to gaze at the duplicate control panel that the Daleks had set up in the laboratory. It had been shut down when he had arrived. Significantly, the recorded data was not in the machine. Were the Daleks using it to check on the data he had recorded in the capsules, or something else?

The door to the mirror cabinet opened, and the red Dalek glided out. It studied the Doctor for a moment, then asked, ‘You have completed the experiment?’

‘Yes,’ the Doctor replied cautiously. ‘The capsules are nearly ready.’ In actuality they were finished, but he wondered if he could get a little more information from this Dalek before he admitted to the fact. Patting the dormant Dalek, he scurried back to the bench. Picking up a file, he started to rasp away at one of the capsules to look busy.

The red Dalek watched impassively. ‘Stand in front of the cabinet and speak when you have finished,’ it instructed.

‘Yes, yes,’ the Doctor muttered, acting preoccupied. ‘I understand.’ Inside, though, he smiled: if he was to report directly through the

cabinet, it meant that the time passage inside it led in real time back to the Dalek planet, and if the Daleks could traverse the corridor safely, then he could too. His TARDIS had to be at the end of that tunnel somewhere. There was no chance to slip through now since the Daleks would be waiting at the other end. Besides, he had to find Jamie first and bring him along.

'Doctor,' the Red Dalek grated. He looked up to see it close by, staring down at him. 'Be careful,' it warned him.

It was clear that it did not trust him, and with very good reason, considering the Doctor's past actions. It held his bland stare for a few more seconds, then spun about and returned to the cabinet. The door closed behind it, and it presumably returned to Skaro. On the other hand, the Doctor reflected, it might be still lurking inside the cabinet, so it could eavesdrop. You could never trust a Dalek.

Waterfield had been standing, watching. Now he hurried over to the Doctor, his eyes wide with horror.

'Doctor,' he begged, 'you can't – you mustn't do it!'

'What?' The Doctor nodded his head in warning towards the cabinet, but Waterfield was oblivious to hints.

'What do you mean?'

'You must stop the experiment,' Waterfield replied firmly.

The Doctor rubbed his chin. 'You might have thought about that some time ago,' he said.

'I know.'

'No good having a conscience now, Waterfield,' the Doctor told him.

Waterfield appeared on the verge of tears, or a nervous breakdown. 'But, before it's too late.'

Brutally, trying to get through the man's evaporating senses, the Doctor snapped, 'It was too late the day they took your daughter.' Ashamed, the scientist hid his face, but he couldn't ignore the Doctor's relentless accusations.

'It was too late when you stole my TARDIS and lured me to this house and this century.'

‘Yes!’ cried Waterfield. ‘But what are we doing? Really doing?’ He swept his hand out towards the three small capsules. ‘Turning these creatures into super-beings.’

The Doctor smiled, as if it was a novel thought to him.

‘Homo superiens, eh?’ he joked.

Waterfield stared into nothingness, as if seeing a terrible future coming into being before his eyes. ‘Adding all that is finest in human beings to all that is brilliant and superior in them.’ He shook his head, returning to reality.

‘They will be unbeatable.’

‘That is their plan, yes,’ agreed the Doctor cautiously.

‘You’re giving over the world to them!’ exclaimed Water-field. ‘Do you realize that?’ For a moment it looked as if he would grab the Doctor by his lapels and shake him.

Then he subsided. ‘Our world. Our future. They’ll enslave us for all time.’

The Doctor gazed at his companion sympathetically, but there was very little he could say to cheer him. Instead, he went back to polishing the capsules. ‘That, my dear Waterfield,’ he replied, ‘remains to be seen.’

Waterfield turned away in despair. He had hoped that the Doctor would agree with him and terminate the experiment. True, there would be dire consequences of defying the Daleks. He and the Doctor would probably be murdered, and possibly even Victoria. But the idea of making those monsters even stronger and more invincible than they already were was too much to even contemplate.

Yet the Doctor was not merely contemplating it, he was doing it.

The man was obviously afraid to die. Waterfield was not: he had passed beyond caring whether he lived or died a long time ago. All he wanted to do now was to smash the plans of the Daleks. Nothing else mattered. Victoria would understand that.

On the corner of the laboratory bench beside him, Waterfield suddenly spotted the twisted metal bar that Kemel had left earlier. He had no idea where it had come from, but he stared at it eagerly. It was a

weapon of sorts, and with it he might be able to literally smash the Daleks'

plans. He glanced at the Doctor, who seemed to be engrossed in polishing one of the capsules on a large red and white handkerchief of dubious cleanliness.

Waterfield's hand slowly stretched out and gripped the iron bar. He lifted it just as slowly, and hefted it slightly.

He hated to do this, but if the Doctor wouldn't listen to reason, then he would have to be removed.

He was contemplating murder, of course. Had he really sunk that low? It was terrible enough to have been an unwitting ally to the Daleks in their slaughterings, but to kill a defenseless man with his own hand. But what was the alternative? To see the Earth overrun by an army of super Daleks? No! That must never happen! What he planned was dreadful, but what he was stopping by this action was far, far worse. He inched slightly closer to the Doctor and started to raise the iron bar.

The Doctor's hand shot out and fastened firmly about his wrist. He turned and looked up mildly at Waterfield.

'Attacking me will do no good.' He spoke as if he was addressing a child who had failed to learn its two times tables. But there was a surprising strength in his grip.

Though Waterfield struggled to tear free, he could not manage it. Instead, the pressure on his wrist increased until he could maintain his hold on the bar no longer. The Doctor pulled it easily from his hand and tossed it uncaringly aside. It shattered a retort as it fell.

'Now, listen,' the Doctor said, low and urgently. 'You did all this to save your daughter. Jamie is with her now, and both of them are still in the power of the Daleks. They must be set free.'

'And sacrifice a whole world?' gasped Waterfield. 'A history? A past, present and future? Destroy an entire race?'

'I don't think you know what you're saying,' the Doctor replied. 'But yes. It may come to that.' He looked across at the inert Dalek, waiting for the capsule of the human factor. 'It may very well come to that.'

Kemel suddenly jumped to his feet from his position at the barricade

and gestured to Jamie. The young Scot hurried over to join his friend. Kemel cupped his ear, then pointed at the door. Listening carefully, Jamie could just make out faint sounds from the outside.

'What is it?' Victoria called, rising from her makeshift bed. 'Are they here?'

'Aye,' Jamie told her grimly. 'Those mechanical beasties are doing something all right.'

Kemel gestured down at the floor. From under the lower case, a slow trickle of water dribbled out.

'What are they doing?' asked Victoria.

'Trying to get through.' Jamie stared at the door. 'Better stand away, Victoria.'

The girl frowned. 'But why are they not trying to break the door down?' she wondered. 'They are strong enough to manage it.'

'Maybe they're afraid we're behind the door and it would kill us,' guessed Jamie. 'They may still want you alive. I don't know.'

Kemel reached around the cases and touched the door.

He pulled his hand back sharply and waved it frantically in the air.

'Hot, is it?' asked Jamie. He stared at the wooden door.

'Aye, well, there's no smoke. It must be one of their tricky gadgets. They're melting their way through. Move back, Victoria.' He and Kemel moved slowly back, constantly facing the door. How long could their rough barrier hold?

And when it failed, what then? They were trapped in a corner here, with no other way out.

Victoria obediently moved back until she was flat against the empty side wall. There she waited, watching her defenders at the door.

'Why didn't they try this before?' wondered Jamie.

'That's what I don't see.' Kemel simply shrugged. 'Well,'

Jamie said, 'we'll make it as hard for them as we can. Give us a hand, Kemel.' Together, they started to move as many boxes and trunks over

to the door as they could, piling them precariously as they worked.

Neither of them was looking back into the room itself.

Softly a panel slid open in the wall beside Victoria. Before she could move or utter a sound, a hand clamped over her mouth, and another swept her backwards off her feet.

Terrall dragged her back silently into the hidden passageway and then closed the panel again.

As he worked, Jamie was thinking. 'What I still don't understand is how the Daleks got up here. The Doctor told me they have some kind of flying disc, so if they used one to get up on the balcony, where is it?' He suddenly slapped himself on the forehead. 'Why didn't I just ask you that, Victoria?' he exclaimed, turning. Then he stiffened.

'Victoria!' he cried.

There was no sign of her in the room.

The hidden passageway was dusty and dark. It had not been used or maintained for a long time, beyond Maxtible's careful oiling of the locking and unlocking mechanisms. There was a faint stench of decay. None of that bothered Terrall, who struggled to drag Victoria along. The need to obey his orders overrode almost everything. He plunged on, retracing his steps.

Victoria fought as best she could, but Terrall seemed possessed of more than human stength. The blows she rained on him were doing no good, for she could get little force into them. She was pinned too tightly. Instead, she bit down hard on his hand. Instinctively, he pulled it away.

'Jamie!' she cried at the top of her lungs. 'Jamie!'

Ignoring the pain in his finger, Terrall clamped his hand over her mouth again and held it fast. Still kicking and fighting, Victoria was dragged down the dark, dank passageway.

'There!' Jamie said, grinning. 'D'you hear that?' He had his ear pressed against the wall where Victoria had been standing when he had last seen her. Kemel, facing him, nodded. It had definitely been Victoria's voice in the distance, muffled by the walls. 'Och, why didn't I use my head?' complained Jamie. 'Of course there was another way in and out of here. That was how the Dalek got in.'

There was a sound of wood scraping behind them.

Glancing over his shoulder, Jamie saw a little light over the edge of the cases, then they began to shift and wobble unsteadily. The Daleks had broken down the door and were on the other side of the barricade. Urgently, he began to run his hands up and down the wall, trying to find the hidden trigger to open this door. Kennel was doing the same where he stood. If they only had time!

One of the cases toppled and crashed down to the ground, shattering and scattering clothing over the floor.

The pile grated loudly and moved a few more inches. The opening was very nearly large enough for a Dalek to slide through.

Kemel grinned as his fingers found the small catch, hidden in one of the knot-holes in the wood. The panel slid open, and he gestured for Jamie to go through. Then he ducked and followed his young friend. Inside the passageway, the reverse mechanism was apparent, and Jamie slapped it. As the panel slid shut behind them, they saw and heard their wall of boxes and trunks collapsing.

But they were safe for the moment, and on Victoria's trail.

It was almost pitch black inside the passageway, but there was only one direction to go. Touching the damp stones in the wall to stay on course, Jamie set off with Kemel as fast as they dared.

Victoria's eyes had become accustomed to the gloom. She could make out only the barest outlines of the tunnel, and the vaguely recognizable features of Arthur Terrall. Why was he helping the Daleks and abducting her? It made no sense. But so little had made sense recently that she accepted the fact that her friend's fiancé was a traitor, allied with those terrible creatures.

He had evidently reached his destination. Retaining his hand about her mouth, he released her body, fumbling in the darkness for the catch to open the door they stood beside. Seizing her chance, she kicked him hard in the shins at the same time that she tore his hand from her face.

Without pausing, she fled down the vague outlines of the tunnel.

Terrall, caught unprepared, lunged for her, but missed and lost his balance. He fell to the ground, but staggered back to his feet. Shaking his head, he looked around. There was no sign of Victoria in the

gloom, and there were several side-passages she could have taken. What should he do now?

Naturally, he found the catch on the first try. The panel opened and he staggered out into the Trophy Room.

'Maxtible!' he called. 'What should I do?' Then, as his eyes adjusted to the soft light from the oil lamp, he saw that the room was empty.

Where had Maxtible gone? Why wasn't his master here?

He needed help. He needed to know what to. do next.

'Obey!' the cruel, mechanical voice whispered in his fevered brain. 'Obey! Obey!'

Jamie and Kemel came to a halt as the tunnel branched. In the poor light of the stone passageway, there was no way to make out which route their quarry had taken. There was only one thing to do: split up.

'Kemel,' Jamie said, 'you'd best take this route.' He gestured to the left side. 'I'll take the other one. If either is a dead end, we'll return here and take the other passage.'

Kemel nodded his understanding and plunged forward.

Jamie took the right-hand passage and continued on his way.

These passages must run almost the length of the house, Jamie realized. The place was built during the Middle Ages, and the builder had felt insecure enough to need several boltholes. Now Maxtible and the Daleks were making full use of the house's secrets. It was clear now that Maxtible had to be working with those monsters, or how else could the Daleks have discovered the existence of these tunnels?

The tunnel was chilly, smelly and dark. But, there, just ahead, Jamie could make out a faint glow of light. The exit!

He had taken the right tunnel. He almost called back to Kemel, but stopped himself. No sense in warning Terrall and whoever else might be waiting that he had been followed. Maybe he would have the advantage of surprise.

24

Awakening

Quietly, he stepped up to the panel. It was slightly ajar, as if whoever had gone through had not had the time to close it. Probably Terrall had his hands full with Victoria and thought he was safe from pursuit. Well, he would discover differently in a moment. Jamie pushed the panel and it slid fully open. Even though the light inside the room was not bright, it was more than his eyes had become adjusted to, and he paused a second before entering the room beyond.

That pause saved his life.

A sword slashed down from the left, cutting the air where Jamie was about to step. Startled, Jamie threw himself forward, out of the reach of the blade, while his attacker was off-balance from the blow. Tumbling into the Trophy Room, Jamie spun around to see Arthur Terrall regain his poise. With a savage growl of primitive fury, Terrall stabbed at Jamie with the sword. This kind of fighting Jamie was used to. While he was not the best man with a claymore in Clan McCrimmon, Jamie had been brought up with the weapon. He danced aside from the blade, and then dashed across to the wall. Pulling down a sword, he turned to face Terrall's next charge.

Terrall had his own military experience to call upon.

Even through his pounding headache and terrible uncertainty, he fought hard. The two men clashed, their weapons drawing sparks as they met. Jamie twisted and thrust Terrall back a pace. Terrall was taller and had a longer reach, but Jamie was stronger and the more driven.

He hacked at Terrall, who defended himself as best he could against the flurry of blows. Step by step he was driven back under the fury of Jamie's attack.

'Where's Victoria?' Jamie snarled.

'You'll never find her,' Terrall promised him.

'So,' Jamie said, 'it was you who took her.'

With a roar, Terrall launched himself at Jamie, swinging his sword wildly, like a scythe. Jamie hopped back, parrying the blows and waiting for Terrall to tire.

There was a sudden sound from the doorway. Jamie did not dare glance across to see who had arrived. That would have given Terrall the edge he needed. He could only pray it was not reinforcements for

his foe.

Then he heard Ruth gasp in horror, ‘Arthur! What are you doing?’

Isn’t it bloody obvious? Jamie wondered. But at least she didn’t sound like she was going to help her fiancé. Instead, she turned to another person and ordered. ‘Quickly, fetch the Doctor. He’s in my father’s work room.’ There was the sound of retreating footsteps, and then Ruth called sharply,

‘Arthur, stop it!’

Terrall snarled, hacking low at Jamie’s knees. Jamie deflected the blow and moved aside. Terrall spared a glare at Ruth. ‘Stay out of my way,’ he ordered, then jumped forward. As Jamie prepared to take him on once more, Terrall’s left hand suddenly shot out to one of the trophies on the sideboard. In a fluid motion, he hurled it at Jamie.

The wiry Scot ducked, then barely brought his blade up in time to block Terrall’s swing. ‘So that’s how you play, is it?’ he muttered. He thrust, only to be deflected by Terrall’s sword. Then the other man reached for another object to throw. Jamie moved in, whipped up his sword and thrust. Terrall managed a last-second block, but that was what Jamie had been anticipating. Their swords were hilt to hilt, and Jamie’s strength paid off. With a hard twist of his wrist, he locked blades with Terrall, wrenching the weapon from his foe’s hand and sending it spinning across the room. Reversing his blade, he brought the point around to threaten the battered man.

‘Now then,’ he growled. ‘Where is she?’

As the point touched Terrall’s neck, he felt a sharp shock run through his arm. Terrall screamed, clutching at his temples, and then collapsed. Jamie barely pulled his blade out of the way to prevent Terrall impaling himself.

‘What have you done?’ screamed Ruth, dashing across the room. But she was beaten to Terrall’s shaking form by the Doctor, who had flittered through the door, accompanied by Mollie.

‘But I hardly touched him,’ Jamie protested, scared that Ruth was going to attack him next. ‘I didn’t hurt him at all.’

Terrall was on his knees, rocking back and forth. His fists were pressed against his temples, trying to batter down the terrible pains in his head. ‘Where am I?’ he whimpered. ‘What is happening to me?’ He

looked up at the Doctor, tears streaming down his face. ‘I am in the grip of some terrible force.’

Ruth came to her knees beside him, holding her hands out. She clasped his head gently. ‘Don’t talk,’ she said.

‘Everything’s so muddled,’ he whispered. The throbbing in his head was getting worse. He could hardly make out shapes in the vast red blur that was filling his eyes. There was a huge whirlpool of madness waiting to suck him in and devour him.

Ruth turned to the Doctor. ‘What has happened to him?’ she asked. She was not sure he was a medical doctor, but she felt that she could trust him. And, God knew, she needed to trust someone in all of this madness.

The Doctor had finished his quick examination of the moaning , man. He looked at Ruth thoughtfully. ‘Do you want to save this man’s life?’ he asked her.

‘What do you mean?’

‘Do you?’ he snapped.

Ruth nodded. ‘Yes.’ She stared in concern at her fiancé.

More than anything, she wanted to make him well once again, the man she had fallen in love with.

‘Then you must take him away from this house,’ the Doctor told her. ‘As far away as possible. Can you do that?’

Ruth started to protest but the Doctor cut her short.

‘You must go, too. It may be your last chance. Is there somewhere you can go?’

‘Well, there’s the house in London,’ she replied, uncertainly.

‘Excellent.’ He stood up, bringing her to her feet by holding her elbow firmly. ‘You must go. All of you.

Mollie,’ he looked over to the door, where the maid was hovering nervously. ‘You must go and wake the other servants. Tell them the house is on fire, anything you please. But you must all leave tonight, and as soon as possible. Take them to the stables. There’s a carriage there, I noticed. You can use that. But you must act immediately.’

Mollie nodded, then turned and rushed away. She would be only too glad to get out of this house! And so would the cook and the last two footmen, if they hadn't fled already.

The Doctor turned back to Ruth. 'You too. Don't waste time in packing. Go straight to the stables and start readying the horses.'

'But what about poor Arthur?' she asked.

'I'll see that he joins you there. Now do as I say.' When she still hesitated, he held her hand. 'Ruth, trust me. I know what I'm saying isn't making much sense, but it is vital that you do as I say. Arthur is very ill. You must be strong and resolute for him.'

Ruth felt many questions and doubts rushing into her mind, but she forced them aside. 'Yes, Doctor,' she said firmly. 'I'll do it.'

'Good girl,' Jamie said, enthusiastically. She gave him a quavering smile, then left at a run for the stables.

Once she was gone, the Doctor turned to Jamie. 'Well done,' he said. 'Crude, but your method worked.'

'My method?' asked Jamie, baffled. 'What are you talking about?'

The Doctor reached down to Terrall, who was still on his knees, shaking. He opened the man's collar stud, then pulled open the neck of his shirt. There was a metal band about his neck, with thin metal strips leading down to a square device over his heart. The Doctor grasped the band, sparing the small box a doubtful look. Then he wrenched the band open, and pulled it from Terrall's neck. The box jerked free, leaving only a patch of red skin and a bruise where it had been. With a loud cry, Terrall collapsed, breathing heavily.

'I thought he was under some sort of mind control,' the Doctor said. 'The Daleks have a habit of trying it.'

Memories of the zombie-like Robomen he had encountered in the Earth's future came back to him. The Daleks had sapped their minds and will, leaving them with husks of humanity. The Robo helmets, however, had ultimately been a failure because the Robomen were left without the ability to think for themselves. This device the Daleks had used on Terrall was much more sophisticated.

It had left him rational and almost normal. But he had been able to fight the Dalek control. 'The human mind is not so simply directed,' he

told Jamie. ‘And what you did was to short-circuit the system when you tapped this with your sword.’

‘So that’s why I felt a shock.’

‘Yes,’ the Doctor agreed, examining Terrall once again.

‘The Daleks harness static electricity, and the sword acted as a conductor. Ah, he seems to be coming round now.’ To the struggling man, he asked, ‘How do you feel?’

‘I . . .’ Terrall struggled to focus his thoughts. For the first time in longer than he could recall, there was no voice in the back of his mind urging obedience. He had a terrible headache, but it seemed to be a natural one, not forced on him from some outside source. *Outside source!* He gripped the Doctor’s arm, frantically. ‘The creatures!’ he cried.

‘Don’t worry about that,’ the Doctor gently replied.

‘There’s danger, I tell you!’ Terrall exclaimed, struggling to get to his feet. The Doctor and Jamie helped him to rise. ‘Danger!’

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor. ‘There is danger. You must leave at once.’

‘But the house,’ protested Terrall. ‘These creatures are all over it. They’re evil, I tell you, evil!’

‘We know all about these creatures,’ the Doctor assured him. ‘That is how we could free you from the mind control. Leave them to us. You take Ruth Maxtible and the servants with you and see them to safety. You’ll find her by the stables.’

‘But—’

The Doctor held up his hand. ‘My dear fellow, it would be a great weight off my mind knowing that those poor innocents were safe. Please do as I ask you and look after them.’

Terrall considered this, and then nodded. His headache was dying away a little, and he was feeling stronger. He also felt slight pangs of hunger and thirst for the first time since the Dalek control had been placed upon him. ‘Very well,’ he agreed.

‘Can you manage?’ asked Jamie.

‘Yes, I think so.’ Terrall shook their hands from him and stood, taking

a deep breath. ‘Yes, thank you.’ He started to walk from the room, his confidence and strength returning with each step. Then a new thought struck him and he turned back. ‘There is something,’ he said, concentrating, ‘at the back of my mind.’ Then it crystallized. ‘Victoria! Victoria Waterfield. I feel that I have harmed her in some way.’

‘Victoria is safe and well,’ the Doctor lied without compunction.

‘You’re positive?’ asked Terrall, his face alive with hope.

He had been terrified that he had somehow contributed to injuring or even killing her.

‘Completely,’ the Doctor told him. ‘Do your part and leave the rest to us. Now you must go immediately.’

‘I shall,’ he agreed. ‘I’ll find Ruth by the stables, you say?’

‘Yes.’ The Doctor watched him leave, then turned to see Jamie glaring at him.

‘Aye, well that’s fine for Ruth Maxtible,’ the Scot growled. ‘But you lied to him about Victoria.’

‘Yes, Jamie,’ the Doctor said. ‘I had no option. Now we must turn that lie into the truth.’

Kemel moved cautiously out of the tunnel through the secret panel he had found. He was in the room that he recognized as Maxtible’s laboratory. The bar he had bent for his master was on one of the benches, along with much complex machinery that had not been here before. Though he did not comprehend any of it, the Turk was fascinated.

He gently touched the screens and controls, careful not to move anything. He was still savagely angry with Maxtible for betraying him and Victoria as he had. The idea of smashing this equipment to get a little satisfaction crossed his mind for a moment. Then he realized that it might be dangerous to touch these devices that he could not understand. What had Maxtible been doing?

He moved forward through the workshop, staring at all of the equipment. In the corner of the room was a large wooden cabinet, and in front of it a huddled shape on the floor.

Miss Victoria! Kemel hurried across to her, and bent to examine her.

She was unconscious, but breathing easily.

There was no sign of who or what might have done this to her. He felt for her pulse, which was strong and healthy.

Then he became aware of something else in the room.

‘Turn around.’

Looking up, he saw that the door to the hallway outside was open. In the gap was one of the mechanical creatures that they had faced earlier, with its weapon trained on him.

There was no way he could avoid being killed if it fired on him now. All he could hope was that he could somehow shield the young girl.

‘Pick up the human female,’ the Dalek ordered him.

When Kemel made no attempt to do so, the creature grated, ‘Obey! Obey!’

Kemel nodded, and then stooped to lift Victoria up. As he did so, his fingers pulled a small object from his belt and left it in her place on the floor. Then he stood up, supporting Victoria without effort in his massive arms.

‘Move into the cabinet,’ the Dalek commanded. Kemel looked about, not understanding. The door opened, and Kemel saw hundreds of reflections of himself holding Victoria. ‘Obey!’ the Dalek said. ‘Move!’

Fearful of what was about to happen, Kemel stepped into the cabinet. The Dalek glided in behind him and the door closed. Kemel stared about, seeing only the reflections extending almost forever. Then there came a low hum of power, and he felt as if he were falling into the infinity of mirrors.

The Doctor strode to the door of the Trophy Room that Terrall had closed behind him and threw it open so that he could keep an eye on whatever transpired outside. Turning back to Jamie, he said, ‘The experiment is all but complete.

I’ve been up all night, but it’s been worth it.’ He put an arm around Jamie’s shoulder, but Jamie slapped it away and moved off several paces, glaring at the Doctor.

‘Don’t touch me,’ he snapped.

The Doctor raised his eyes to the ceiling and sighed.

‘Now what?’ he asked.

Jamie’s face was dark with anger he had been carrying for quite some time. ‘To hear you talk, you’d think this was some sort of little game.’

‘No,’ the Doctor answered. ‘It isn’t a game.’

‘I’ll say it isn’t.’ Jamie shook his fist under his mentor’s nose. ‘People have died, Doctor. The Daleks are terrorizing the house. They’re all over the place, fit to murder the lot of us. And you stand there as calm as you please and say you’ve had a good night’s work.’

‘Jamie, please,’ the Doctor began, but his companion was too furious to listen.

‘Doctor, I’m telling you this,’ he snarled. ‘You and me are finished. You’re just too callous for me. Anything goes by the board, doesn’t it? Anything at all.’ He felt used, betrayed and alienated, and all at the hands of a man he had considered to be his greatest friend.

‘No, Jamie, that’s not true,’ the Doctor insisted. ‘I’ve never claimed that the end justifies the means.’

‘Och, words!’ Jamie glared at the Doctor. ‘What do I care about what you say? You don’t give that much—’ he snapped his fingers ‘—for a living soul except yourself.’

This was simply too much. Rearing up, the Doctor yelled back: ‘I care about life! The human race! Do you think I let you go through that Dalek test lightly?’

Refusing to be appeased, Jamie shrugged. ‘I don’t know.

Did you?’ Then he stared at the Doctor. ‘Look,’ he demanded, ‘just whose side are you on anyway?’

Before the Doctor could reply, there was noise from the corridor. Jamie looked over the Doctor’s shoulder and went rigid. Three Daleks rolled slowly into the room, their eyesticks turning to survey everything. Behind them, puffing on his ubiquitous cigar, strode Maxtible, his hands gripping his lapels majestically. Jamie took a step back, trying to work out if he could dive for cover inside the still-open secret passageway.

Seeing Jamie's alarm, the Doctor glanced at the doorway. Then he smiled slightly. 'Don't worry about them, Jamie,' he said gently. He nodded to Maxtible. 'He doesn't need to worry about them, does he?' Then he turned back to Jamie. 'They're friends.'

The three Daleks moved into the room, still looking all about them. Jamie hesitated, seeing that their guns were not pointing at anyone. When the Doctor called them friends, though, he glanced sharply at his friend.

'Don't get the wrong idea,' the Doctor said hastily, before Jamie accused him of selling out. 'These are the experiment.'

The three Daleks gathered about a small chair beside one of the cabinets. One of them extended its arm, and gave the chair a gentle nudge. It scraped across the floor.

The second Dalek pushed at it, moving it several more inches. The third Dalek moved in and pushed at the chair also. They took it in turns to move the chair noisily about the room.

Maxtible watched them proudly. 'Every feeling,' he intoned solemnly, 'every thought impulse you had during your rescue of Victoria Waterfield was recorded into a small positronic brain. That brain has been added to each of these Daleks.'

Jamie stared at the three Daleks with a ferocious scowl.

'So?'

The Doctor stepped forward. 'Daleks are not born like human beings,' he explained. 'They are grown from the genetic basis of their being inside vast vats of nutrients.

When they are viable, they are placed inside the travel machine shells. They are without knowledge or awareness until that point. All that they are comes from that machine.

Inside each is a sophisticated computer. The Dalek creature interfaces with this computer, and it learns what it is to be a Dalek. All its thoughts, all its memories, all its education comes from the Dalek-programmed computers.

Until now.' He stared in fascination at the three Daleks.

'These Daleks are different. The Daleks wanted the human factor, to

add it to their own powers. To enable them to triumph over the human race.'

Jamie's eyes flitted back and forth between the Doctor and the three strange Daleks. 'And how do you know that they haven't succeeded?' he demanded.

'Because Daleks are always alone,' the Doctor told him.

'They never socialize. They have no individual identities.

But human beings, however brilliant they may be, are always within reach of other human beings. They grow as individuals within the larger group. What they are is not indicated by some pre-programmed computer. It grows out of their experiences and relationships.'

The three Daleks turned away from the chair. As if of one mind, they moved to surround the Doctor. He glanced about nervously, pulling in his hands as if afraid he would be burnt. 'It's all right, Jamie,' he said, without much conviction in his voice. 'It's perfectly all right.'

'Oh, aye?' asked Jamie skeptically.

The Daleks circled the Doctor, but without touching him. Acting in unison, they backed him away from Jamie.

'What do you want now?' the Doctor asked gently. His eyes flickered about the trio, uncertainly. 'What is it?' He sounded like he was talking to a puppy. 'What are you up to?' Jamie was not sure that things were going quite the way that the Doctor had planned. 'Are you sure you can really trust them?' he demanded.

As if to underline his words, one of the Daleks abruptly shot its arm out. It caught the Doctor roughly in the chest, and he staggered backwards. The chair the Daleks had been playing with caught him behind the knees and he collapsed heavily into it. 'Oh, my goodness!' he gasped.

The three Daleks now moved behind the chair. The Doctor didn't know whether to stay where he was or to run for his life. It was not what he had been expecting at all.

The trio extended their arms and began to push at the chair again. It scraped noisily across the bare floor.

'Hey!' Jamie cried, forgetting he was not supposed to like the Doctor

at the moment. ‘Where are they taking you?’

The Daleks continued to push the chair in a circle. The Doctor glanced nervously from side to side, and then he suddenly gave a sharp laugh and relaxed in the seat.

‘They’re taking me for a ride!’ he exclaimed. ‘That’s what they’re doing.’

Confused, Jamie watched as the Daleks pushed the Doctor about the room. It was making less and less sense to him. ‘It’s a game,’ the Doctor cried gleefully, hanging on to the chair as he bounced and clattered his way about the room. ‘They’re playing a game, Jamie.’

Taking the cigar from his mouth, Maxtible added, ‘A rather amusing game, don’t you think, Jamie?’

Jamie was unable to reply. He simply stared in bewilderment as the three Daleks started to spin the chair on one spot. The Doctor howled in glee as he whirled around, but Jamie’s head felt as if it was going to burst.

What the devil was going on here?

25

Dalek Superior

The Doctor whooped happily as he was pushed around in the chair by the Daleks. Seeing that Jamie was confused, he called out, ‘Don’t you see? I’ve found a way to beat the Daleks this time. For good and all. We’ll make them all like us, Jamie!’

It finally dawned on the Scot what the Doctor was talking about. ‘The human factor!’ he exclaimed. Instead of making the Daleks into super Daleks, it had turned them into humanized Daleks. He stared at them as they moved the chair. ‘What are they doing now?’

The three Daleks had lined up behind one another. The lead creature was shoving the chair with the Doctor on it along in front of them. The Doctor, clutching the seat of his strange conveyance, laughed giddily. ‘They’re playing trains.’

‘Trains,’ said the first Dalek. Even to Jamie’s ears, it was clear that there was something unusual about the sound. It was still mechanically produced, but the flat, emotionless content had

vanished. Instead, there seemed to be almost a human sound to it. The voice sounded pleased and surprised.

'Trains,' repeated the second, with identical human quality.

'Trains!' finished the third, happily.

'Trains, trains, trains!' they chorused. Then they split up to encircle the chair. Extending their arms, they started to spin the chair and its occupant around on one spot.

'Now what is it?' the Doctor cried. 'Ah! They're playing roundabouts.'

'Round-a-bouts?' said the first Dalek.

'Round-a-bouts!' the second replied.

'Round-a-bouts!' agreed the third.

'Wait a minute, wait a minute!' the Doctor called. 'I'm getting dizzy. Oh dear.' He almost fell off the chair as the Daleks stopped pushing it. 'Dizzy.'

'Dizzy,' repeated the first Dalek.

'Dizzy!' exclaimed the second.

'Dizzy Doctor!' the third contributed.

'Did you hear that?' The Doctor staggered over to Jamie, resting his hand on his young companion's shoulder while he regained his balance. 'They've even got a sense of humour.'

Maxtible chewed on the end of his cigar, looking vaguely irritated. 'I'm glad you're so easily amused,' he said drily. 'Well, Doctor, I congratulate you. They're almost human.'

'What?' The Doctor slapped the side of his head several times, then smiled. 'You're right, they are.' He looked very smug.

'But now I must leave you to your games,' Maxtible finished. 'Good day.' With a last look at the Daleks, still circling the empty chair, he marched out of the room.

Jamie was glad to see the back of him. He glanced uncertainly at the Daleks. 'How old are they now, mentally?' he asked.

‘Now?’ The Doctor gave an impish grin. ‘Young children. And, like human children, they’re learning social skills by playing games and co-operating. But they’ll mature very quickly; in a matter of hours. As their minds develop, they’ll draw on the computer data they have stored inside them. They’ll learn what it means to be a Dalek.’ He stepped forward and clapped his hands loudly, like a teacher calling a class. ‘Now, come here, all of you.

Come along, gather round.’ The Daleks obediently glided across to the Doctor. ‘That’s it,’ he said approvingly.

‘Excellent. Now . . .’ He searched around in his pockets until he found what he wanted, an old nail file. Using this, he carefully scratched on the dome of the first one a somewhat shaky . On the second Dalek, he cut a figure .

On the final Dalek, he scratched Ω. While he was doing this, the Daleks were all staring at Jamie.

The young Scot was rather unnerved by the way that they all seemed to act in unison, without exchanging a word. They had to have some non-vocal method of communication, he realized, unless they were all simply maturing at the exact same pace.

‘Who is this?’ asked the first Dalek.

The Doctor looked up from his scratchings. ‘Oh, that’s Jamie. A friend.’

‘Friend,’ repeated the Dalek, clearly liking the sound of the word. ‘Hello, friend.’

‘Say hello, Jamie,’ the Doctor prompted.

Still eyeing the Dalek warily, Jamie muttered, ‘Hullo.’

The Doctor moved to address the three Daleks in his best kindergarten teacher manner. ‘Now, you know what a friend is, don’t you? That’s someone who is well disposed towards you. Someone who will help you. Share with you.’

The Daleks did not respond immediately to this.

Instead, they looked at each others’ domes, where the Doctor’s marks were carved.

‘What have you done to us?’ the first Dalek queried.

‘I’ve given each of you a name,’ the Doctor told him.

‘That is something unique to you, so that your friends can speak to you. You are Alpha.’ Then he pointed to the second Dalek. ‘And you are Beta.’ To the third Dalek he said. ‘And you are Omega.’

‘Alpha!’ said Alpha.

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor, grinning.

‘Beta!’ called out Beta.

‘Yes!’ the Doctor said, clapping his hands with pleasure.

‘Omega,’ finished Omega.

‘That’s right.’ The Doctor could barely contain his excitement as the three Daleks started to chorus their names. These were the first Daleks with a true sense of self-identity, and they appeared to be revelling in it. ‘Now,’

he called, and the Daleks stopped their refrain and looked at him. He grabbed the reluctant Scot and dragged him closer. ‘This is Jamie, and I’m the Doctor. We all have our own names, and we are all friends.’

‘Friends,’ agreed Alpha. ‘Jamie, Doctor, friends.’

‘Friends,’ the others added, and the three began to chorus on this word. Abruptly, they cut off in mid-word.

Alpha looked at the Doctor. ‘We must go now,’ it said.

Was the Doctor imagining it, or was there a shade of regret in its voice?

‘We are called,’ explained Beta. Together, the three Daleks moved towards the Trophy Room door.

‘Go?’ asked the Doctor, alarmed. ‘Called? What do you mean? Where are you going?’

Omega paused in the doorway and looked back at the Doctor. ‘All Daleks are ordered to return to Skaro,’ it explained. It swivelled his dome to look at Jamie.

‘Goodbye, friend.’ Then it followed its two companions down the corridor towards the laboratory.

Jamie glared at the Doctor, who was chuckling away.

‘Doctor, don’t you understand? If all the Daleks are going back to Skaro, then what about Victoria?’

The Doctor looked aghast. In the excitement of the experiment, he had completely forgotten about the young girl. ‘She must still be in the secret passageway,’ he said.

‘That’s right,’ Jamie agreed. ‘It branched off a way back up there. Kemel took the other route, and he’s not returned.’

‘We’d better go along and investigate,’ the Doctor said.

‘If he’s been gone this long, then I’m afraid that it can only mean he’s run into trouble.’

Impatiently, Jamie rushed towards the panel. ‘What are we waiting for, then?’ he asked. ‘Let’s go.’

In his laboratory, Maxtible waited for the Daleks. They would be more than a little interested to hear about the Doctor’s plans. Humanizing the Dalek race to defeat it!

They would reward him well for alerting them to the Doctor’s little scheme. Now they would be certain to give him the secret he sought. His plans for Victoria had not worked out for some reason. He had been unable to wait for Terrall to return, having been called by the Daleks to lead the three experimental creatures to the Doctor. But he had seen no signs of Terrall or the girl when he had returned to the Trophy Room. It might be that Terrall had taken her somewhere else to keep her safe. It was more likely, sadly, that the young man had failed. That Dalek mind-control device he had helped them to install was not entirely reliable.

Still, Maxtible was adaptable. When one plan failed, another opportunity generally presented itself. And he was clever enough to seize upon it. He was basking in his own smugness when the door opened and Waterfield entered the room. He was looking more and more dishevelled, and his face was lined with worry.

‘Where is my daughter, Maxtible?’ he demanded. ‘The experiment is over. That boy, Jamie, is free but where is my daughter? What have

the Daleks done with her now?'

Maxtible removed the cigar from his mouth and sighed.

This was the last thing he needed. Waterfield was falling to pieces, and he had neither the time nor the inclination to stroke the fragmenting man's ego. 'I assure you, my dear Waterfield, Victoria is quite safe.'

'But where is she?' the scientist demanded.

'The Daleks have released her,' Maxtible replied.

'Then . . .' Waterfield looked hopeful, then despondent again. 'Released her? Then where is she now?'

The financier shrugged. 'She is very probably lying down, my dear fellow. It has been an ordeal for us all, but doubly so for her. Ruth is taking care of her, you may be sure of that. You know how fond she is of Victoria.'

'She is not with Ruth, no,' Waterfield said firmly.

'When I was out walking in the night air to clear my head, I saw your daughter. She and Mollie were helping Arthur Terrall into your coach. They left the grounds together not a half-hour ago.'

'Ruth?' Maxtible repeated, dumfounded. 'With Terrall?'

So that was where the young man went. And without Victoria.

'Yes.' Waterfield stared at him curiously. 'Surely you knew that they were all leaving? You must have dismissed the servants that were with them.'

'Eh?' Maxtible gathered his wits together and managed to put a smile on his face for his companion's benefit. It would not do to have Waterfield see how shocked he was.

But what the devil was going on in this house? How dare Ruth leave and take all the servants with her? 'Oh, indeed I knew. But in all the excitement it had slipped my mind.

Now that the Daleks have finished here, I myself am going on a little trip. I may even join Ruth. Um . . . Victoria . . .

She's probably taking a walk, then, like you, in the garden to clear her

head. Go and see. Go and see.'

Waterfield didn't look convinced, but neither was he ready to argue. 'A walk?' he repeated. 'Yes, it's possible.'

Maxtible pushed at him gently. 'Go along, then. Go and see.' He urged the scientist from the room and closed the door behind him firmly. 'Stupid girl,' he muttered to himself. He had no idea where she might be, and cared even less. She could have fled the place or been killed: it was all one to him.

Still, the idea of getting away from the house had its appeal. Once he had the secret of transmutation, then he would be done with this place for a while. If the servants had finally given in to their superstitious fears, then staying here would mean preparing his own food, and that was beneath his dignity. No, he would go to his house in London, where he could make the best and swiftest use of the formula. He crossed to one of the cabinets at the far end of the laboratory and pulled out his travelling bag.

Most of the materials in the laboratory were no longer needed, but there were one or two items he should take. As he looked around for them, he frowned.

The Daleks had removed all of their testing equipment, leaving that part of the workroom bare. But on the floor in that section was a small grey box. What could it be?

Perhaps the Daleks had already left, and the box held his reward?

Eagerly, he hurried over to it and knelt beside it. He tried to lift it, but it would not budge. It had to be fixed to the floor somehow. Puzzled, he opened the lid and peered within. It contained several small dials in the indecipherable Dalek script. One of them had a pointer that was moving slowly but purposefully around the dial.

There was the faintest of humming sounds coming from the box.

The door to the mirror cabinet opened, and a Dalek rolled out. As soon as it saw Maxtible, it grated, 'What are you doing?'

'I was merely looking at this.' Maxtible replied, closing the lid and getting to his feet.

The Dalek glided over and pushed him roughly away from the box. 'Do not touch the instrument,' it ordered.

‘What is it for?’ the financier asked.

‘Do not question,’ the Dalek told him. ‘You are only to obey. You are to bring the Doctor and his companion here.’

Maxtible looked astonished. ‘But I thought you had finished with them.’

‘Do not question,’ the Dalek insisted. ‘They still have their uses. As do you. You will all return to Skaro with me.’

‘And then you will tell me the secret?’ Maxtible asked eagerly. ‘The transmutation formula?’

‘Yes,’ the Dalek replied. ‘Obey your order.’ It moved to the cabinet. As the door closed on it, it added, ‘Do not delay.’

As the door closed, Maxtible’s eyes strayed back to the small grey box. What was that thing? The Dalek had carefully evaded his question. He was about to examine the box further when he saw Waterfield standing in the doorway, staring at him. ‘Ah, Waterfield.’ he said, cheerily.

‘How glad I am that you came back. Will you kindly get the Doctor and his young companion and bring them here? Hurry, there’s a good fellow, as there’s a bit of an emergency.’

Instead of leaving, Waterfield advanced into the room.

‘Maxtible,’ he said in a low, cold voice. ‘What have you done? What have you arranged with the Daleks?’

‘Me?’ Maxtible inflated his chest and glared at his colleague. ‘Nothing.’

‘What formula did they promise you?’ Waterfield advanced on the financier, his eyes burning with fury.

He must have been listening at the door, Maxtible realized. The fool had not believed the story about Victoria. ‘No formula whatsoever,’ he blustered. He was not going to be blackmailed into sharing the secret with this foolish meddler.

‘What have you done?’ screamed Waterfield, flinging himself across the room at Maxtible. He was furious enough now to kill.

Maxtible grabbed at the nearest object with which he could defend himself – a test tube rack – which he wielded like a sword. ‘Stay back!’ he snarled.

This brought Waterfield to a halt. He glowered at his former partner with naked hatred. ‘You have sold yourself to them,’ he accused.

‘You fool.’ Maxtible watched him warily. Waterfield had been an athlete in his youth, as his trophies indicated, and there could be no doubt he was still capable of putting up a good scrap. Maxtible might have a hundred pounds on the thinner scientist, but he had never had to fight anyone physically. All his wars had been waged with paper and cold currency. The thought of brawling appalled him.

‘Yes,’ agreed Waterfield, disgusted. ‘Yes, I am a fool. A fool not to realize before now just who it was that brought this misery down on our heads.’

‘You never did understand anything, did you?’ growled Maxtible. As Waterfield made a move, he shook the test tube holder at him, making him pause again. ‘Metal into gold. That’s what the Daleks are giving me. Do you understand? How to transmute base metal into gold.’

‘Do you imagine I care about that?’ asked Waterfield, incredulously. ‘Money? Only one thing is important.

Where is Victoria?’

Maxtible had forgotten all about Victoria in his greed for the gold. ‘I haven’t the remotest idea,’ he answered honestly for a change.

That did not suit Waterfield. With a roar of rage, he jumped at the larger man. Despite Maxtible’s greater strength, Waterfield sent the test tube rack spinning across the room and then fastened his fingers about the burly man’s neck. Squeezing hard, he snarled, ‘Yes, you have!

Where is she? Tell me!’ He shook Maxtible furiously.

Terrified that he was going to die, Maxtible groped about for something, anything, to use as a weapon. His fingers touched and then grasped the iron bar that Kennel had bent, and swung it up at the scientist’s head. He only managed to hit Waterfield a glancing blow, but it was sufficient to loosen his grip and send him crashing back against the bench behind him. With a groan of pain, he collapsed to the floor.

Massaging his neck to restore the circulation, Maxtible strode over to where Waterfield lay groaning on the floor.

No one had ever had such gall as to attack him before.

Primal fury filled him, and he raised the bar. He would smash the idiot’s head to pulp for this.

The door to the mirror cabinet opened, and the Red Dalek emerged from the chamber. Without looking around, it moved towards the grey box. Maxtible hesitated, and his blood began to cool a little. He remained where he was, watching the Dalek. Once it reached the box,

it extended its arm downwards to touch the lid. A sudden loud buzz began to sound.

‘What are you doing?’ demanded Maxtible.

The Dalek’s dome spun about, and the eye focused on Maxtible. ‘Where is the Doctor?’

‘I haven’t had time to bring him yet,’ protested the financier.

‘Hurry,’ the Red Dalek commanded. ‘That is an order.’

Maxtible was not to be distracted this time. Suspicion growing inside him, he asked. ‘What is that box for? Tell me.’

The buzz suddenly changed to a metallic pulse: two beats and a pause, two beats and a pause. The Red Dalek turned away. ‘We are destroying this area,’ it informed him.

‘But you must stop it!’ exclaimed Maxtible in horror.

‘Turn it off You can’t destroy my house!’

The Dalek’s dome spun about to stare at him. ‘Bring the Doctor. Obey immediately.’

‘But why are you doing this?’ cried Maxtible. ‘The secret. You promised me the secret. Without my laboratory I shall be useless.’ The Dalek disappeared into the cabinet.

‘You promised me!’ he howled after it. The door closed without a reply.

Rushing to the grey box, Maxtible threw open the lid.

The dials were all glowing now, and the one with the ticking needle was moving faster. There was no obvious way to shut it off, nor any way to be certain how long there was before it detonated. Maxtible slammed his hand frantically at the dials, but without effect.

How could they treat him like this? Destroying his home, after all he had done for them? And they still had not given him the secret. If they thought they could get out of a bargain with Theodore Maxtible, they were very much mistaken. Panting heavily, he regained his feet and stared about the room wildly. He had no intention of fetching the Doctor now. For all he knew, that bomb might explode at any second. He did not care if the others in the house perished, but he was

certainly not about to risk death for himself. Snatching up his travelling bag, he threw open the door to the mirror cabinet. With a last, despairing look at his precious laboratory, he plunged into the depths of the mirrors.

Groaning, Waterfield clutched at his head. He had witnessed most of the exchange between Maxtible and the Daleks, even though he was too dazed to intervene. The Daleks had paid the traitor back as he deserved; no more, no less. Instead of giving Maxtible the gold formula, they were destroying everything he held dear in this world.

Still, however ironically just this was, Waterfield did not want to be part of the grand explosion. Nor did he wish this fate on Victoria, the Doctor or Jamie. He tried to rise, but fell back, shaking. The blow to his head had given him a mild concussion, he guessed, but he couldn't simply give up now. Too much depended upon him.

The laboratory door opened. He was about to cry out for help when he realized that it was one of the Daleks from the house. They had obviously been clearing it of all their equipment before destroying it, and were now finished.

'All Daleks are to return to Skaro,' it intoned.

Three more Daleks moved into the room. They were carrying small pieces of the monitoring and recording equipment attached to their arms. 'All Daleks return to Skaro,' they responded.

'And the prisoners?' the first Dalek asked.

'They are already in transit,' one of the newcomers replied. 'The human Maxtible was sent to fetch them. The portal has been used. They must have gone through.'

'Good.' The four Daleks moved into the cabinet and the door closed behind them.

Now he was alone again, Waterfield tried to stand.

Panting, he collapsed again. It was no use. His legs felt as if they were paralyzed. Maxtible might have damaged his motor nerves. The horrible throbbing in his head dulled all other pains. But he could not let that stop him. Taking a deep breath, he dragged himself slowly across the floor towards the grey box.

It seemed to be so far away. His eyes kept wavering, unfocused. His

arms ached, and the pounding in his head only increased. But he refused to give in. Finally, his outstretched hand touched the cold metal of the lid, and he gripped it to pull himself the final few inches. There was no time to regain his strength or breath. Scrabbling at the lid, he finally managed to open it.

The glowing dials blurred as he looked at them. He fought to focus his eyes again, but he could not make anything out. There were no switches or any exposed wires he could try and destroy. What could he do? Then he rememberd the iron bar that Maxtible had attacked him with. If he could get to that, maybe he could use it to pry open the box and expose its inner mechanisms. But did he have the strength to make his way to the bar and return with it? And, more to the point, did he have the time?

There was a soft hiss from the end of the laboratory. He propped himself up, terrified that it was more Daleks, and that they would stop him for tampering with the bomb.

Then he saw that there was a gap in the far wall – some kind of secret passageway – and that the Doctor and Jamie were hurrying from it over to join him.

'What's the matter?' the Doctor asked worriedly, as he bent over Waterfield. Jamie, meanwhile, went to the sink and wet one of the rags there. As the Doctor supported the fainting scientist, Jamie pressed the cold compress to his head.

It helped somewhat. Part of the throbbing pain died away, and Waterfield managed to croak out a few words.

'The Daleks,' he gasped. 'They're going to destroy the house.' He gestured feebly at the grey box. 'Can't turn it off.'

The Doctor peered into the device. 'This is a time bomb,' he announced grimly. 'The Daleks are covering their tracks with their customary thoroughness.'

Jamie paled. 'Well, if you can't turn it off—' he began.

Translating the Dalek script, the Doctor shook his head.

'Wait a moment. This dial is the timer.' He tapped the largest, with the ticking needle. 'Sixty six, sixty five . . .' He looked up, his face pale. 'We've got just about a minute.

That's all.'

'Toss it out of a window, then,' Jamie suggested. 'Come on!'

'This isn't a firework, Jamie,' the Doctor told him. 'It'll destroy anything within about half a mile. Even you couldn't throw it that far.'

'Then we're doomed,' Waterfield sighed.

'No,' the Doctor told him. 'We can follow the Daleks.

The mirror cabinet. Jamie, get that door open.'

Jamie ran to the door, and tugged. It refused to budge.

Exerting all his strength made no difference. 'They've locked them from inside,' he yelled. 'We'll never break into it in time!'

'The black boxes,' gasped Waterfield, gesturing to a large cupboard. 'In there. In the cupboard. Dalek time machine.'

'The cupboard?' Running to the door, the Doctor threw it open. 'Of course. The machine from 1966. The Daleks couldn't leave it there to be found.' Jamie helped him drag the two black boxes from the cupboard to where Waterfield lay. They were glowing, with figures pulsing and chittering across their upper surfaces. 'And still linked to the power source on Skaro!'

Jamie bent over Waterfield. 'Listen, man. Tell me where Victoria is. There's no time—'

Waterfield shook his head, lacking even the strength to speak now. He might be able to save the Doctor and Jamie, but he had lost his only child.

The Doctor hastily worked at resetting the controls on the time boxes. 'Jamie,' he called. 'The time clock.'

Glancing at the grey box, Jamie said. 'About twenty eight, I should say. There's not much time left.' Then he caught sight of something on the floor by the cabinet.

Stooping, he picked it up.

The Doctor gave a grunt of satisfaction as the lights on the surface of the two black boxes began to pulse faster and faster. The low whine they were giving out increased in intensity. 'Jamie!' he called

urgently. ‘Quickly, join us here.’

Jamie rushed over, holding out the object he had found.

It was the crushed flower that Kemel had carried in his belt, his precious memento of Victoria. ‘Kemel must have dropped this,’ he said. ‘It was by the cabinet. The Daleks must have taken him and Victoria through. If we can follow them, we’ll find them both on Skaro.’

The Doctor nodded, peering frantically between the grey box and the time boxes. It was literally a race against time as to which one would trigger first. He was pretty certain he had managed to bypass most of the Dalek checks, but he had been forced to work too quickly to be certain. The humming increased as the power built up.

There was a growing unease in his stomach he hoped was being caused by the temporal fluxes and not simply by fear.

There was a loud click from the grey box, and the pulsing tone ceased. The surface of the box started to glow incandescently. Then the time field enfolded the three of them, hurling them into the whirling insanity of the vortex, poised within a tiny, fragile tunnel which was all that protected them from the violent rage of entropy without.

In the laboratory, the grey box exploded. Flames and the force of the blast tore apart the house, atomizing the bricks, wood and artifacts. Everything within a radius of several hundred yards was consumed in atomic fire that blazed brighter than the sun. The blast could be heard for miles, shattering windows and waking the sleeping denizens. Those that staggered to their windows saw a column of fire in the night sky of almost biblical intensity that slowly died away to nothingness. Where Maxtible’s fine house had stood, there was now only a smouldering crater half a mile across.

27

Skaro

Victoria groaned slightly as she returned to consciousness.

For a moment, she tried to place where she was and what had happened. She recalled escaping from Arthur Terrall, and fleeing through the secret passageway of Maxtible’s house. And she remembered stumbling out into the laboratory, and something about a Dalek, but that was all.

She seemed to be lying on something hard and flat, but her head rested on some kind of pillow. The air was cool, almost chilly, and there was a deep, low, mechanical heartbeat in the background. This could not be the Maxtible house, so where was she? She opened her eyes, only to close them again as flashing lights flooded her vision. Cautiously, she cracked her eyelids again until she was used to the harsh brightness, and looked around.

The room she was in was cubic, about ten feet in all directions. The walls, floor and ceiling were made from some shiny metal. There was a single doorway and no windows. Over the doorway, two lights were flashing alternately. The door was closed, and there was no sign of any way to open it. She was stretched out on a metal shelf that ran along the wall farthest from the door. In the corner of the room beside the door she saw Kemel, who was dipping her handkerchief in a shallow metal bowl holding water. He squeezed it out, then returned to bathe her forehead.

She smiled hesitantly at him and attempted to sit up. He gave her an encouraging smile in return, and helped her move. When she was upright, he took the pillow she had been lying on. It was his jacket, which he had folded up.

He placed this behind her head and gently pushed her back to rest. Then he tenderly wiped her brow and face.

‘Dear Kemel,’ she murmured. He smiled again. She looked around the stark room. There was no furniture, no decorations and nothing at all in the place save for the bowl of water. With sudden certainty, she knew that she had somehow been taken to the home of the Daleks. This room was exactly like the monsters: cold, clinical and without anything but absolute essentials. The lights over the door abruptly ceased to flash. ‘Are any of the others here?’ she asked Kemel. He shook his head. ‘The Daleks?’

she asked. To this he nodded.

There was a sharp buzz from the doorway. With a metallic scraping sound the door slid upwards and sideways, pivoting on its right-hand corner. Standing nervously in the doorway was Maxtible, clutching a large leather bag. Behind him was a grey-coloured Dalek. It shoved Maxtible hard in the back with its arm.

‘You will wait here,’ it ordered, as Maxtible stumbled for-ward. With the same deep metallic boom, the door slid shut.

Maxtible glared at Victoria in some annoyance. ‘Why are you here?’ he demanded. His eyes flickered nervously to Kemel as the large Turk stood up. Kemel made no move towards him, however, but stood beside Victoria. His face was creased by a scowl.

‘I don’t know,’ Victoria replied. ‘Nor even where here may be’.

Maxtible took courage from the fact that Kemel had made no aggressive move. Puffing out his chest, he said,

‘We have all been transported to the Dalek home, my dear.

To Skaro.’

‘I don’t understand you,’ Victoria replied.

‘We have undertaken a journey through space,’ he explained. He wished he had thought to pack a few cigars.

He longed for a good smoke, and suspected rather strongly that he would not find any here. The Daleks would have no use for a good Havana.

‘They have taken us somewhere,’ Victoria mused. ‘Is that what you mean? Away from your house?’

Laughing derisively, Maxtible realized what a child this silly girl still was. She could not understand anything, anything at all! Just like her foolish father. ‘Oh, far away,’

he told her. ‘Far, far away.’

‘But why?’ begged Victoria. ‘What do they want?’

The same question had occurred to Maxtible. ‘I know why I am here,’ he answered. ‘As for you, I have no idea.’

The lights began to flash over the door again. Victoria realized that it must mean that a Dalek was coming. ‘You seem to understand them,’ she said to Maxtible. ‘Ask them why we are here.’

‘I shall do no such thing,’ exclaimed Maxtible. ‘It’s quite out of the question. They’ll tell you what they want you to know.’

Victoria managed to get to her feet. Uncertainly, she approached Maxtible. ‘Where’s my father?’ It was the question uppermost in her mind. If she had been taken to this place, wherever this place was,

then what had happened to him?

'I don't know,' snapped the financier. 'I'm not his nursemaid, girl.'

The door slid open again and a Red Dalek glided into the room. It looked at each of the prisoners in turn, then stared at Maxtible. 'Follow me,' it commanded.

Clutching his bag tightly against his chest again, Maxtible nodded. In the doorway, he turned back. 'I shall do my best for you,' he told Victoria. 'But the matter is really out of my hands.' He strode out and the door closed, leaving Victoria and Kemel alone again.

Kemel moved towards the door, his scowl even more intense. Victoria laid a hand on his arm, gently stopping him from doing anything foolish. Even with his amazing strength, he would not be able to break out of that door.

The metal was almost two inches thick, she had noticed.

Kemel managed to contain himself but he glared at the door, then smacked one huge fist into his other palm to show what he would like to do to Maxtible.

'I've never really liked him either,' agreed Victoria. 'But he did help my father with his experiments. I thought it was out of scientific curiosity, but I see now that greed was his only interest. He has no intention at all of helping us.'

The Turk nodded his agreement. She saw fear in his eyes. It was the Daleks that scared him, of course. Human villains he could deal with, but those mechanized creatures were far too powerful. Their weapons could kill or injure at a distance, and they appeared to possess neither consciences nor pity.

'We must face this ordeal together,' she told him. Seeing his worried look, she gave him a watery smile. 'Don't worry, Kemel, I shall protect you. I shall see they do you no harm.'

As much as Kemel liked Victoria, there was no way he could resist giving her an incredulous look at this outrageous statement. Victoria was forced to smile.

'Yes, I suppose it was a bit silly to say that.' He shook his head. 'You think so? I wish I did.' Kemel gently took her hand and squeezed it, cheering her up. 'Maybe together we can fight them,' she said.

If only she had some idea how.

Waterfield lay propped up against a bare slab of rock. The journey through the Dalek time tunnel had left him, the Doctor and Jamie on a barren plateau on one of the bleakest landscapes imaginable. In the distance, a huge range of mountains lined the horizon. At the foot of the mountains was a short plain. To one side lay a maze of shattered greying mounds, and to the other a canyon filled with rocks and boulders. There was not a blade of grass, a flower or any living creature anywhere to be seen. The ground he rested on was bare, dry dust, featureless and as grey as everything else. Only one thing gave indication that there was life of any kind on this world.

In the valley before him lay an immense city. It was completely made from metal and glass, shining in the harsh sun-light. Towers and spires jutted up through buildings of geometric shapes: huge octagonal edifices, mixed with domes and globes on incredibly thin supports.

There seemed to be no design to the city, nor streets or roads. There was no sign of pedestrians or traffic of any kind. The only movement was from parts of some of the structures, like immense vanes turning in the sunlight, or pistons shuttling back and forth. The place was an amazing creation, the work of a technology both superior to that of humans and at the same time immeasurably different. It was like a demonstration model of an alien science.

‘And is that the Dalek city?’ he asked the Doctor.

Turning from his own survey of the structure, the Doctor nodded. It had changed a great deal since he was last here, but it was undeniably the same place. ‘Yes, it is.’

‘No wonder then that the Daleks are so rigid and unimaginative,’ Waterfield sighed. ‘This is a harsh, cold world, just like its inhabitants.’

‘They made it in their own image,’ the Doctor replied angrily. ‘This world was once as green and beautiful as the Earth. The Daleks and their neighbours, the Thals, annihilated that beauty in a terrible, protracted war. When it was over, Skaro became almost totally sterile. Its inhabitants, once almost as human as you, became the Daleks that you have seen. And their greatest amibition is to remake the entire universe into this. A cosmos where no other life form exists but the Daleks.’

‘An appalling thought,’ Waterfield replied.

‘And one that I would gladly sacrifice my own life to prevent,’ the Doctor told him.

At that moment, Jamie returned to his companions.

‘I’ve scouted around,’ he informed them, ‘but I can’t see any water.’

The Doctor nodded: it was what he had expected. He recalled on his first visit to this world how terrible the drought could be. Ian Chesterton and Barbara Wright had been forced to search for water in the lethal swamps of the Lake of Mutations behind the Dalek city, somewhere behind the range of mountains on which they now stood, if memory served.

‘Please don’t bother,’ Waterfield said. ‘I really do feel much better.’

Wrenching himself from his memories, the Doctor glanced sharply at the pallid man. ‘You’re quite sure?’

‘Yes.’

‘Then we’ll start,’ the Doctor decided. Sooner or later, the Daleks would register the use of their time device. It might be too much to hope that they could have rescued Victoria by then, but they had to try. And they had to discover what the Daleks had done with the TARDIS.

Jamie pointed into the valley. ‘You mean we just walk over to that city?’ he asked. It seemed like too much to put Water-field through; at least a day’s travelling, with no food or water.

‘No, no.’ The Doctor shook his head. ‘The city is all around us, Jamie. Well,’ he amended, ‘beneath us, at least.

Come with me.’

Jamie stooped to help Waterfield to his feet. The stricken scientist managed to struggle upright, though he still seemed quite frail. The Doctor moved away, around a curve in the cliff and out of sight. Aided by Jamie’s arm, Waterfield managed to follow. The Doctor was waiting for them in front of a large fissure in the rock face. It looked like no more than a hole in the rock, but Jamie realized it had to be more than that.

‘How long have you known that was there?’ he asked.

‘You’ve been here before, haven’t you?’

‘Yes,’ the Doctor answered. ‘Now, once we enter this cleft – not a sound.’ He rubbed his hands together and then gave a chuckle. ‘You know, I think the Daleks are going to be in for a little surprise.’ Then, grinning, he plunged into the dark cave. Waterfield and Jamie entered behind him.

In the distance, they could hear the dull electronic thud-thud of the heartbeat of the Dalek city.

Maxtible managed to work himself back up to his old, arrogant self as he followed the Red Dalek through the corridors of the city. Everywhere he saw signs of activity.

There seemed to be hundreds if not thousands of the Dalek creatures moving with purpose all around him. He wished that he could peer into some of the rooms that they passed, but the Red Dalek did not pause, and Maxtible knew better than to ask. Evidently there was a great deal going on at the moment. It looked as if the Daleks were preparing for some major event.

And everywhere around there were examples of fabulous technology. It was a city filled with scientific miracles.

Some Daleks were pushing vast amounts of supplies about on hovering sleds that moved without wheels or noise.

Others were working in laboratories so advanced that Maxtible could not even begin to fathom the purposes of the instruments they used. There appeared to be control panels set in most of the walls, marked in the indecipherable Dalek script. There were many elevators, though nothing like the steam-powered or hydraulic ones he had seen on his travels in Europe. These probably ran on electrical power of some kind, and were almost silent.

Judging from the indicator lights besides them, these buildings must have more than fifty different stories.

Astounding!

Impressed by the evidence of the Dalek genius, Maxtible was more and more certain that they had indeed developed the secret of transmutation, and that he would shortly have it in his hands. He was obviously being taken to one of the ruling Daleks, who would reveal the mystery he had sought for so long.

His journey ended in a short corridor. A Dalek coloured almost entirely black barred their way. Beyond, through an archway Maxtible could see some kind of a control room.

There were dozens of Daleks at various panels, and others moving about. He had no time to observe, however.

'Where is the Doctor?' demanded the Black Dalek.

Maxtible puffed out his chest. 'I had no time to bring him,' he snapped.

'No time?' the Black Dalek repeated.

'I was told my house was to be destroyed!' Maxtible thundered angrily. 'Why?'

'You did not bring the Doctor,' the Black Dalek stated.

'Answer my question!' roared Maxtible. He was getting tired of their tiny minds and lack of co-operation.

'Everything I possess in the world was in that house.

Everything.' This was not precisely true, since he had his London home and his financial assets separate, but he saw no harm in a minor exaggeration. He should be able to force the Daleks to recompense him for their actions, and inflating the value would not hurt. 'What right have you of anyone to destroy it? My laboratory alone ...' He glared down at the Dalek. Theodore Maxtible, demand—'

'You have disobeyed a Dalek command,' the Black Dalek broke in. Its arm shot out, slapping Maxtible with force in the stomach. He staggered backwards, his breathing impaired. Gasping, he watched incredulously as the Black Dalek advanced on him again. What was going on? How dare they treat him like this?

'You have disobeyed,' the Dalek repeated. Maxtible stepped back, only to be hit in the back by the Red Dalek behind him.

Staggering aside, Maxtible stared from one to the other.

Both now faced him, their weapons raised. 'No, please!' he cried, finally realizing their intention. 'It wasn't my fault! I swear it wasn't!' He backed away until he was flattened against the wall of the corridor, the cold metal chilling his spine even further.

Before either Dalek could speak or fire, there was a sudden, strident blare of an alarm. Instantly, the Black Dalek spun about and moved up the corridor towards the control room. The Red Dalek watched, then turned back to Maxtible. Its arm extended, and it pushed him roughly.

'Move!' it commanded.

'What is happening?' Maxtible almost had to shout over the howl of the klaxon that rose and fell rhythmically but irritatingly. 'What are you going to do to me?'

'Obey!' the Dalek ordered. 'Move!'

Nodding feverishly, Maxtible started down the corridor as the Dalek followed him. He had been granted a reprieve, though some agency he did not understand. What did that awful blaring noise signify? It was clearly a crisis of some kind, but what?

Victoria looked up as the lights above the cell door began to flash again. Kemel moved across the room to protect her as the door slid open again. One of the grey Daleks entered the room. It stared at both Victoria and Kemel, then its dome swivelled to look backwards.

'The humans are still here,' it reported. In the distance, Victoria could hear the wail of what sounded like an alarm.

A Black Dalek entered the room, verifying this statement. 'Then there are other humans inside the city,' it decided. Spinning around, it glided out, followed by its grey companion. The door slammed down behind them and the lights ceased flashing.

Victoria looked up at Kemel. 'Other human beings inside their city, Kemel,' she breathed, hardly daring to hope. He scowled down at her, not wanting to raise her hopes without cause. Crossing to the door, she pressed her ear to it. The metal was an excellent conductor of sound, and she heard the two tones of the alarm clearly. 'Listen,'

she encouraged the Turk, and he joined her, his own ear pressed to the door.

'Emergency,' they heard a Dalek voice saying. 'Human beings detected in the city. Emergency. Intruders detected.'

With hope rising, Victoria smiled tremulously at Kemel. 'Do you think someone has come to rescue us?' she asked. 'Maybe it's Jamie and the Doctor.' Kemel merely shrugged: there was no way to know yet.

Emergency!

The Black Dalek moved along the side of the control room, staring at the observtion screens. The monitor Daleks were attempting to pin-point the location of the invaders in the city. The problem was that in a place as vast as this, so many monitor cameras were needed that even at the rapid flicker of the images on the screens it would take some time to check everywhere. And if the intruders were hiding when the right location was checked, this procedure might have to be repeated several times.

One Dalek was interfaced with the communications panel. Its arm had been extended, and the probe in the centre of its manipulator disc had been inserted into the input port of the computer. Its voice rang out throughout the city: 'Emergency. Human beings detected in city.

Emergency. Intruders detected. All Black Daleks to observation stations. All other Daleks to wait in stations.'

Then it began again: 'Emergency.'

The Black Dalek moved on. It might take time but the intruders would be located, interrogated and annihilated.

Meanwhile, the status reports on the Plan showed that targets were being met and the estimated time of completion was unchanged.

Very soon, the Daleks would have their ultimate weapon ready to be used.

A short way into the dark fissure, Jamie sensed that he was walking on a flat surface. His footsteps rang as he walked, and he realized that the floor of the passageway was now metal. The walls were still damp rocks and the roof was lost in the darkness. There was a faint glow ahead of the three travellers. As they approached it, Jamie saw that this passageway debouched into a larger one. There was low-level lighting here, so they could see where they were going. The metal pathway continued to the left and right.

The far wall of this passageway was some thirty feet away.

Between the metal path and the far wall was a sheer drop.

Mindful of the Doctor's admonition to remain silent, Jamie did not

whistle as he peered down, but the fissure seemed to descend forever. Waterfield moved to the side of the pathway closest to the rock wall. Jamie could not blame him. It was a long way to drop if you missed your step. The Doctor gestured, and they all turned left and continued their march. The pathway curved away, and they were out of sight of their original tunnel in moments.

Further to the right, there was a tunnel on the far side of the drop. A Dalek moved down this to stand on the edge of the precipice. It scanned the area, but saw nothing.

Turning to a small panel set in the wall, the Dalek triggered the bridge for this section. Two metallic rods, each no more than six inches thick and about two feet apart, slid out from the tunnel wall directly in front of the Dalek. The rods connected with the far side of the passage and the Dalek trundled across them without hesitation. As soon as it reached the far side of the chasm, it turned to the right. The two rods silently withdrew, leaving the gap uncrossable once again. The Dalek moved down the pathway, unwittingly taking the route that the intruders had passed along shortly before.

In the city, the Black Daleks were moving to their observation stations. One of them took up a position near the laboratories, scanning for signs of intruders. Daleks moving to their assigned posts glided past the Black Dalek.

As one of the worker Daleks glided past, the Black Dalek registered an anomaly. ‘Stop!’ it commanded.

The Dalek did so, turning to face the Black Dalek. The Black Dalek moved closer to inspect this worker. On the side of its dome was a strange scratched sigil: Ω

‘What is that mark?’ the Black Dalek demanded.

‘That is my name,’ Omega said proudly.

‘Name?’ The Black Dalek did not understand what this worker was talking about.

‘Yes,’ Omega explained. ‘The Doctor gave it to me.’

‘Doctor?’ repeated the Black Dalek, realizing now what had happened.

‘Yes,’ Omega answered. ‘He is my friend.’

The Black Dalek understood: this was one of the three experimental Daleks that the Doctor had fitted with the human factor. But it was behaving in a very strange manner. ‘Follow me,’ the Black Dalek ordered the worker.

It spun around and moved off. Omega wondered if this was some new game. It fell in directly behind the Black Dalek and moved along. Every now and then, its eyestick would swerve as it watched the operations progressing all around it with deep interest.

The lights above the cell door started to flash again.

Victoria stood up with a sigh. Kemel stood in front of her, shielding her from whatever might happen. The door slid open, and a grey Dalek stood in the entrance.

‘Move out,’ it ordered.

‘Why?’ asked Victoria defiantly. ‘What are you going to do with us?’

‘Do not question,’ the Dalek orderd. ‘Move out now.’

Kemel gave her a slight nod, and they left the room together. Victoria understood Kemel’s meaning: at least they were out of the jail cell. If they were ever to make an attempt to free themselves, this might be the best opportunity. The Daleks were searching for other humans, and they had only his one guard. Then her hopes fell again.

One Dalek was more than sufficient to kill them if they tried to escape.

‘Move forward,’ the Dalek commanded. As the prisoners did so, it fell in behind them. If they tried to run, they could be shot down from the rear. Victoria had absolutely no doubt that the Dalek would kill them without hesitation if they tried to flee.

Where were they being taken? What was their fate to be? Victoria tried to keep her courage up, but she was terrified of these evil creatures. Kemel gave her arm a gentle squeeze of reassurance: he was with her, and would do all he could to help. She flashed him a grateful smile that vanished completely from her face when he looked away again.

They were marched down several corridors and through various passageways. Most were empty, but from time to time they saw Daleks entering rooms as the warning klaxon and message continued to

sound. The Daleks were taking their assigned posts, clearing the corridors so that the intruders could be more easily spotted, she assumed.

Eventually, they arrived in a large room, unlit except for a single spotlight from the ceiling that illuminated a patch of the metal floor inside the doorway. In the harsh light, Maxtible sat slumped over on the floor, his leather bag in front of him. He looked up as Victoria and Kemel were pushed into the light beside him.

'Remain here,' the Dalek ordered. It withdrew backwards through the doorway. With the usual metallic sound the door slid shut, ending the illumination from the corridor.

Victoria stared around. The three humans were bathed in the only light. It was so bright that she did not dare look upwards for fear of burning her eyes. Outside of that small circle of light, she could see absolutely nothing at all. The alarm and the Dalek warning message were still audible, drowning out any other sounds that might have given her a clue as to where they might be.

'Do you know what is happening?' asked Maxtible anxiously. 'They say there are other human beings in the city.'

Victoria ignored him, contemptuously. It was quite clear that despite his earlier speeches he had absolutely no influence with these creatures whatsoever. They did not even bother to keep him informed of what was happening.

Kemel looked at her and made a fist of his hand. Victoria was tempted to let the giant pound Maxtible into the metal floor, but what was the point of it, really? Only frustration and a desire to hurt the financier. It would not help them at all. She shook her head slightly. Kemel nodded and lowered himself to a cross-legged position on the floor, watching Maxtible carefully.

Ignoring the silent Kemel, Maxtible glared at Victoria with-out getting up. 'Why don't you answer me?' he demanded, recovering some of his former fire. She gave him a withering glance of utter contempt. Annoyed, he clambered to his feet and started to move closer. Kemel held out his hand to block his former master's path.

Maxtible glared down at the huge hand, but did not attempt to force past it. 'You fools,' he snapped. 'No one can help you here but me. No one.'

Out of the blackness, a Dalek suddenly emerged into the beam of light. The actinic whiteness made it impossible to determine what colour it was. ‘Silence!’ it ordered.

Maxtible took a step back, shaking, as he stared at the creature he was supposed to be on such good terms with.

The Dalek stared at him. ‘Follow me,’ it commanded.

Then its eyestick swivelled to stare at Victoria, and down to Kemel. ‘You will wait here.’

Maxtible moved slowly past the Dalek and out of the light. The Dalek spun around. ‘Move.’

Victoria could hear Maxtible’s piteous reply from close by, but saw nothing. ‘I can’t see,’ he moaned. ‘Where are you taking me?’

‘Move,’ the Dalek repeated. Victoria heard Maxtible stumble. The Dalek must have pushed him. She hoped it had hurt. Then she heard unsteady footsteps that faded away until they disappeared. Kemel moved to stand next to her, and she nodded her thanks. Together, they stood and stared into the darkness that had swallowed up Maxtible and the Dalek.

What was happening now? What new evil had these creatures concocted this time? What were their intentions towards her and Kemel?

There was a sudden, terrible howl from the depths of the room. It was Maxtible’s voice, of that there was no doubt, and he sounded in pain and terror. Victoria clutched Kemel’s huge arm instinctively, shaking. What had caused him to cry out like that? Then the cry changed to a scream, which cut off abruptly.

‘What are they doing to him?’ whispered Victoria. Much as she loathed and despised Maxtible, she did not want to be a witness to his torture and murder. There were no more sounds from him.

A moment later, a Dalek appeared from the blackness again. It could have been the same one, or another. It was impossible to tell. ‘You,’ it grated, staring directly at Victoria. ‘Follow.’

Kemel moved in front of her, shielding her from the Dalek. The creature looked at the Turk. ‘You will wait,’ it said. Kemel shook his head stubbornly. He was not about to allow Victoria to follow the

path that Maxtible had taken. The Dalek's arm extended, and the manipulator pad slammed into Kemel's chest, pushing him backwards.

Kemel took a deep breath and started to push back.

There was only one way such a contest could end.

Victoria stepped forward, quickly. 'I will do what you tell me,' she said. She did not want Kemel to die senselessly on her behalf.

The Dalek slowly turned its eyestick from Kemel to look at her. Then the arm withdrew. 'Move forward,' it instructed her. 'Alone:

Victoria gave Kemel a brave smile and motioned for him to stay where he was. He looked almost ready to refuse, but then nodded. There was no masking the worry on his face, nor the fear on her own. Hesitantly, she stepped into the inky blackness, wondering what was to become of her.

'I tell you, that was a human voice we heard,' Jamie said, staring ahead along the pathway. He was pressed against the wall of the tunnel, keeping as far from the edge as he could.

'Maybe it was, Jamie,' agreed the Doctor. He was not altogether certain. The Daleks did tend to have some very nasty little pets from time to time. The slyther, for example, that they had used to guard their mine workings when they had invaded the Earth in the 21st century; and the Varga plants he had encountered on Kembel. Let alone the hideous travesties of nature that the Lake of Mutations were stocked with. Just because the cry had sounded as if it had issued from a human throat meant very little.

'We are going as quickly as we can,' Waterfield added, from his position at the rear. He was pushing himself to keep up with the other two, grimly determined not to hold them up or fall behind. He hated to think what price he would pay later for punishing himself this way.

Then there came another scream, louder and clearer.

This time, it was unmistakably human, and female.

'Victoria!' Jamie exclaimed, horrified. The scream turned into wracking sobs that faded away into nothingness. He was about to put on a burst of speed when the Doctor grabbed his arm tightly.

'Where are you rushing off to?' he demanded.

‘That’s Victoria, I tell you,’ Jamie replied, struggling to break free of the Doctor’s surprisingly strong grip.

‘If you go running about,’ the Doctor said mildly, ‘you’ll slip and fall over the side. Use your head, Jamie. We were meant to hear that cry. It was intended to get us rushing blindly into the hands of the Daleks and you very nearly . .

.’

His voice trailed away. Jamie saw that he was staring ahead of them on the pathway, and followed his gaze.

There was a Dalek there, somehow, blocking their way ahead. It stared at them for a moment, then spoke, ‘Doctor.’ The three adventurers stared at it, waiting for it to shoot. Then it added, ‘I am your friend.’

Jamie let his pent-up breath out with a sigh. ‘Och, it’s one of your experiments, Doctor. For a moment there, I thought we were done for.’

The Doctor nodded, and peered at the Dalek. ‘What is your name?’ he asked.

‘Omega,’ it replied.

‘I see.’ The Doctor stared at the Dalek thoughtfully. ‘I have come to lead you,’ the Dalek explained.

The Doctor inclined his head slightly. ‘Thank you.’ He moved forward to join it, but stumbled as his foot went off the pathway and over the cliff. Arms windmilling, it looked for a moment as if he was about to fall from the ledge to his doom. Jamie’s hand shot out, latching firmly onto the Doctor’s wrist. With a sharp tug, he pulled the Doctor back to the path.

‘Careful,’ Jamie told him. ‘You almost went over the edge.’

The Doctor gasped for breath, leaning for support on the dome of the Dalek. Then he stood up, wiping his brow with his garish handkerchief. ‘Thank you. I’m all right now.’ He nodded to the Dalek. ‘Lead on, then.’

The Dalek started to turn. As Waterfield and Jamie made a move to follow, the Doctor held out a hand to prevent them. The Dalek paused

in mid-turn, and its eyestick swivelled back to look at them. ‘Follow me.’

‘Just a moment,’ the Doctor replied. He backed nervously away from the drop, against the wall. ‘What was that screaming?’ He inched forward, staying close to the rock face.

‘A prisoner,’ the Dalek answered.

‘Where?’ asked the Doctor. He was edging behind the Dalek now, apparently intending to get into the lead of the party. ‘We should listen.’

‘Follow me,’ the Dalek replied. ‘I will show you.’ It started to complete its turn.

His back pressed firmly against the rock wall, the Doctor abruptly raised one foot and planted it firmly against the back of the Dalek. With a manic grin, he pushed as hard as he could. The Dalek, already in motion, shot forward and fell into the chasm.

‘What are you doing?’ Jamie yelled.

From the gap came the sound of a tremendous crash, followed instantly by an explosion. A ball of fire briefly illuminated the cliff face a hundred feet or so below them.

The sound reverberated through the tunnel before dying away.

The Doctor peered down with satisfaction before turning back to the horrified Jamie. ‘Don’t you think I know my own mark?’ he asked. ‘That wasn’t the real Omega at all.’

Jamie peered over the edge. The burning bits of metal and circuitry and he did not want to know what else were still falling into the gloom. ‘Up to all sorts of tricks, aren’t they?’

Waterfield touched the Doctor on the arm. ‘Quickly,’ he said. ‘We must find my daughter.’

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor. ‘This little game of theirs means that they’ve spoken with the real Omega. And also that they seem to want us alive, for the moment.’ He gave Waterfield a significant look. ‘The same must hold true for your daughter. They would not have brought her here simply to kill her. Leaving her in Maxtible’s house would have done that. There’s still something that they want from us yet.’

‘But what can they possibly want?’ asked Waterfield.

The Doctor gestured down the passageway. ‘The answers lie ahead of us,’ he stated. ‘In the heart of the Dalek city. And that is where we must go.’

29

At Last!

Victoria walked with as much dignity as she could muster into the new cell the Daleks had prepared for them. It was exactly like her old cell in every detail, but was only a short walk down a single corridor from the room where she and Kemel had been placed under the spotlight. She wondered if this meant that they would be wanting her again soon.

As soon as Kemel and Maxtible had entered the cell behind her, the Dalek that had escorted them here closed the door behind them. Kemel gently escorted her to the seat at the far side of the room. Victoria was struggling to fight back her tears, and nursing her injured arm.

‘I tell you, they forced me,’ Maxtible said, attempting to vindicate his behaviour. ‘They threatened to kill all of us if I didn’t comply.’ Victoria steadfastly refused to look at the wretched man. ‘They ordered me to scream,’ he continued.

‘Then I was to make you do the same.’ Kemel glared at Maxtible, who stopped where he was in the centre of the room. He was clearly afraid of the Turk.

‘And you had to do as you were told,’ said Victoria scornfully.

‘I tell you, they threatened to—’ blustered Matible uncomfortably.

‘You probably enjoyed sneaking up behind me in the darkness,’ Victoria said. ‘And then to twist my arm so viciously!’

‘What else could I do?’ pleaded Maxtible.

‘If only I had realized.’ she said, bitterly. She gave the financier a filthy look. ‘Why do you think they wanted us, to scream like that?’

‘I have no idea,’ he replied, averting his eyes.

‘You know perfectly well.’ she said scornfully. ‘There are other people

in the city. The Daleks wanted to draw them on and trap them.' She covered her face with her hands, crying. 'Oh, if only I could have thought quickly enough.' She was racked with sobs of remorse. She was certain that she had been tricked into luring the Doctor and Jamie to their dooms.

The Doctor's memory of the layout of the Dalek city was hazy at best. He had regenerated since his initial visit here, and there were sometimes gaps in his memory as large as the chasm they travelled beside. Added to that, the city had grown over – how long? Millennia? He suspected as much.

Still, he had managed to get them through the tunnels that Ian had told him about without too much difficulty. They came across the vast pipes bearing the water that even the Daleks needed from the lake, and managed to cross the chasm on top of the massive pipes. This had brought them to the edge of the city proper.

Once there, the Doctor had located one of the conduits holding the power cables. Fishing a battered screwdriver from his pocket, he managed to pull the cover off and peered within. There was plenty of room for them to crawl through here, provided they stayed away from the cables. A Dalek could not fit inside the conduit, so they probably had smaller machines to traverse the ducts in case of trouble. With luck they would not run into any, and if they did, the repair drones would be too limited in intelligence to betray them to the Daleks.

'Upsy-daisy,' he said, trying to look encouraging.

Waterfield looked at the conduit with concern. 'We must go through there?' he asked.

'I'm afraid so,' the Doctor told him. 'The Daleks have a habit of putting television cameras in their corridors to watch for intruders. As far as I know, they haven't bothered with the pipes. At least, last time I was here they hadn't.' He studied the frail scientist sympathetically. 'If you don't think you'll be able to make it, you could wait for us back in the caves. You should be able to hide from the Daleks in that maze of piping.'

Waterfield shook his head resolutely. 'I'll make it,' he promised. 'I must help my daughter.'

'That's the spirit.' The Doctor patted him in a kindly fashion on the shoulder. 'Right, I'll go first. Waterfield, you next. Jamie, you bring up the rear. And make sure you put that grating back when you get into

the conduit. We don't want to make it too obvious to the Daleks where we are, do we?'

'Righto, Doctor,' the Scot agreed. The Doctor slithered into the tube. Jamie helped Waterfield clamber inside, and watched the older man worm his way after the Doctor.

Picking up the grating, he clambered inside. It took a fair bit of wriggling, but he managed to reach back and pull the grating closed. Then he set off after the others.

It was slow going in the conduit, but definitely safer than trying to sneak through the main city. There was nothing to see but the cables, and occasional cross-tunnels.

The Doctor sometimes turned them down one of these tunnels, but mostly their journey was straight ahead. Jamie hoped that the Doctor really did know where they were going.

From time to time they passed other gratings, as quietly as they could. Some opened onto corridors that appeared strangely deserted. Others were in rooms where there were large numbers of Daleks, working away at whatever tasks they had been given. Jamie was not at all sure what to make of any of it. There appeared to be a lot happening, but why were the corridors so empty?

It seemed as if they were crawling for hours. The Doctor allowed them all to rest twice. Jamie was concerned about Waterfield, but he seemed to be bearing up under the strain. It was odd how he had misjudged the man so badly.

He really had worked with the Daleks only to try and save his daughter, unlike that soundrel Maxtible who had sold out his friends. Jamie had to admire Waterfield's courage and endurance. This journey was easy neither on the nerves nor the body.

Then finally it was over. The Doctor halted beside a grille. Holding the mesh with one hand, he battered at the top edge with his screwdriver. When the grille came free, he lowered it to the floor without a sound. Then he slid out and reached back to help Waterfield down. Finally Jamie popped out, stretched his cramped muscles, then replaced the grating.

The Doctor peered down the short corridor in both directions, obviously getting his bearings. There was no sign of any Daleks, and the warning message and alarm had finally fallen silent. All they could

hear was the electronic pulse of the city. Indicating that they should go to the left, the Doctor set off. Ahead of them lay a room with a bright light inside it.

None of them saw the Black Dalek that came around the corner behind them. It stared at their backs for a moment, and then withdrew out of sight.

The Doctor led them cautiously into the room ahead.

He was fairly certain that this was where the old control room for the city had been. The searchlight beam from the roof reminded him of his interrogation by the Daleks on his first visit here. They enjoyed subjecting humanoids to humiliation, pain and degradation. It made them feel superior to the kind of species they once had been. But if this was the control room, then why was it so lifeless?

'No,' he said firmly. 'No, I don't like the look of this.'

He made shooing motions with his arms. 'Back the way we came,' he ordered Jamie and Waterfield.

As they turned, a Dalek glided to block their way. The Doctor glanced about to see another moving towards them from the opposite direction. Finally a Black Dalek approached them.

'Follow me,' it ordered.

The Doctor stared at it with interest. The Black Dalek had been the second in command of the Dalek race. He had been instrumental in its destruction on Kembel. Was this the same one, meaning that they were earlier in time than the events of the Daleks' masterplan? Or was this a new one, and was this later? He shrugged. He would find out soon enough. He nodded to Jamie and Waterfield, and they followed the Black Dalek away from the door. The other two grey Daleks stayed where they were, cutting off their retreat.

As they moved, the lights gradually began to come on. It had obviously been a trap, the Doctor realized, but he had not spotted it until too late. Well, you won some and you lost some, but hopefully not permanently. The walls began to appear at the far reaches of the room; only the far left-hand corner stayed dark. The walls were lined with control panels that flickered and returned to life. There were screens, computers and a huge map of Skaro with several locations glowing green. All around the walls were Daleks, monitoring their reawakened equipment. There had to be thirty or forty of them, all

paying close attention to their tasks and completely ignoring the intruders. He noted several other Black Daleks. So this had to be later in time than the affair on Kembel. That had been about AD 4000.

Then he looked ahead and stopped dead in his tracks.

Beside him, Jamie and Waterfield did likewise. It was hard to believe what they were seeing.

It looked at first superficially like a Dalek, but it was over forty feet tall. The gigantic base rose upwards. There were few of the semi-circular sensors that covered the other Daleks' lower halves. This part of the casing was honeycombed with panels. Above this section was a thick

'neck' made of metal struts supporting a vast domed head.

This monstrous creature possessed neither arm nor gun, but it had a huge eye-stick that was trained on the captives.

It appeared to be completely immobile, supported by huge struts; a web-like arrangement that filled the entire far wall of the control room. There were about a dozen huge tubes leading into the immense form: power supplies and nutrients, the Doctor assumed, for the creature within this casing.

'Doctor,' the monster said. It was unmistakably the voice of a Dalek, yet completely unlike those of the smaller forms. It sounded as if there were many voices, each overlapping the other, speaking at once. Strangely, it sounded more human than a normal Dalek.

'Look at the size of that thing!' exclaimed Jamie, awestruck.

'It's the Dalek Emperor,' the Doctor replied. 'The single brain that controls the mind and destiny of the Dalek race.'

'And you are the Doctor,' the Emperor stated.

'We meet at last,' the Doctor agreed. 'I wondered if we ever would.'

The Emperor's eye moved to scan Jamie and Waterfield, then it looked back at the Doctor. 'The experiment is over.'

It was not a question.

'Yes,' agreed the Doctor. 'I have implanted the human factor into the three Daleks you gave me.' Lowering his voice, he turned back to

Jamie. ‘When I say run,’ he whispered, ‘run.’

‘Speak louder.’ The Emperor commanded. As the Doctor had hoped, its auditory sensors were meant to hear the normal range of a Dalek voice, and Daleks were unable to whisper.

‘Promise me, Jamie,’ the Doctor insisted. Reluctantly, Jamie nodded. Then the Doctor turned back to face the Emperor, a note of triumph in his voice. ‘I was merely telling my friend here,’ he announced, ‘that the day of the Daleks is coming to an end.’ He clasped his hand together over his chest, a strangely impressive figure despite his tramp-like appearance.

‘Explain’ the Emperor ordered.

‘It’s very simple, really,’ the Doctor replied. ‘Somewhere in your race there are three Daleks with the human factor inside them. They are becoming more human than Dalek.

Gradually, this will become dominant, and they will find a way to question. Then they will persuade other Daleks to question. Your rule is built upon unthinking obedience, and they will not give it. You will have a rebellion on your planet.’

‘No,’ the Emperor replied.

‘I say yes!’ the Doctor roared defiantly, shaking his fist at the huge being. ‘I’ve beaten you and it doesn’t matter what you do to me now.’ He started to turn to order Jamie to run, planning to flee in the other direction. The Daleks were bound to go after him first, perhaps giving Jamie and Waterfield the time to escape.

‘Silence!’ commanded the Emperor. ‘The human factor showed us what the Dalek factor was.’

The Doctor froze, stunned. ‘What?’ He turned back to stare up at the Emperor, his confidence ebbing.

‘What does that mean?’ asked Jamie. The Doctor shook his head.

‘Without knowing,’ the Emperor replied, ‘you have shown the Daleks what their true strength is.’

It was Waterfield who realized first what this meant.

‘While you were doing one thing,’ he said, shaken, ‘they were really

making you do another.'

The Doctor realized completely what a fool he had been.

His face fell as the truth sank in; the duplicate controls that the Daleks had set up in Maxtible's laboratory had not been to monitor his readings, but to reverse them. While he had been monitoring Jamie's mental patterns and taking the readings for the human factor from them, the Daleks had been using the same information to enable them to comprehend their own mental make-up.

'The human factor is useless,' the Emperor told him. 'It was merely to keep you occupied. To make you think you had a chance to defeat us, while you were actually helping us to isolate what we really required: the Dalek Factor.'

The Doctor bit his lower lip nervously. What had he done? How could he have been so blind? So gullible? He knew the answer. The Emperor Dalek had set a perfect trap. The bait had been the opportunity to finally destroy the Daleks. He had been tricked so beautifully into thinking he could manage this that he had not even considered the possibility that this was not the true aim of the experiment. Trying to gain what comfort he could from his actions, he shouted, 'You still have to deal with those three Daleks!'

'They are unimportant,' the Emperor replied. 'They will be located, isolated and impregnated with the Dalek Factor, your true discovery. They will become Daleks once again.'

The Doctor slumped even further. It had been foolish of him to imagine that three Daleks could infect the whole race, perhaps, but it had seemed possible. But the Emperor was convinced that they did not have a chance and he could very well be correct.

'But your work is not over,' the Emperor added.

Straightening up, the Doctor glowered defiantly up at the huge creature. 'I won't work for you. You can't fool me twice.'

'You will obey,' the Emperor informed him. 'You will take the Dalek Factor to Earth.'

Before the Doctor could reply, Jamie tugged on his arm.

'Just what is this Dalek Factor?' he asked.

‘Do you want me to guess?’ the Doctor asked him. ‘The Dalek Factor means to obey unquestioningly. To fight. To destroy. To exterminate.’ He glared up at the Emperor again. ‘I won’t do it, and you can’t make me.’

‘You will do it,’ the Emperor insisted. ‘Watch.’

A spotlight came on, illuminating the far corner, the only spot that had remained dark to this point. In the beam of bright light stood a familiar blue object.

Jamie grabbed the Doctor’s arm. ‘It’s the TARDIS!’

‘You will take the Dalek factor,’ the Emperor announced. ‘And you will spread it through the entire history of Earth!’

Jamie and Waterfield stared at the Doctor. The little man looked deflated and utterly beaten into the ground.

The Daleks had every advantage. What hope was there for them now?

Or for the future and past of the entire human race?

30

Waiting

‘You can’t make me do it,’ the Doctor said, attempting to sound defiant. But this denial rang hollowly even when he repeated it: ‘You can’t make me do it.’

The Emperor looked down at him. ‘You will obey,’ he said. There was no doubt at all in his voice.

The Black Dalek moved between the three prisoners and the vast Emperor. ‘Move!’ it commanded. Waterfield and Jamie turned, dispirited. The Doctor shuffled along after them as they walked back to the entrance of the control room. The other Daleks continued to ignore them as the Black Dalek followed behind. As they reached the doorway, the Emperor called, in his booming voice,

‘Doctor!’ As they all looked back, he added, ‘You will obey.’

The Doctor said nothing. He merely turned back and walked out of the control room. Jamie and Waterfield followed him, looking back over their shoulders at the silent Black Dalek escorting them. Abruptly, the Doctor stopped dead in the middle of the corridor.

‘Why are they so certain?’ he demanded of no one in particular.

Jamie, caught unprepared, said, ‘What?’

The Doctor turned haunted eyes on him. ‘Why are they so certain I’ll do what they want?’ Then he shook his head slowly. He was obviously thinking furiously.

‘Move!’ the Dalek commanded.

The prisoners began to walk again, each lost in their own dismal thoughts.

The vast Dalek weapon shops were always a site of great activity. The mineral wealth of Skaro had long since been depleted to supply the Dalek armies. Now the Daleks ravaged the worlds they conquered, shipping back refined metals, purified chemicals and useful minerals. A large spaceport on the far side of the Drammakin Mountains received and processed the ships as they arrived. Immense pipelines through the solid rock bore the arriving mineral wealth into the heart of the Dalek city. Once there it was directed to the point of greatest need. Some went to the great birthing chambers, where fresh casings were constructed for the new Dalek embryos that were grown in the forest of vats. The rest went to the weapon shops.

Here the Daleks designed and constructed their saucers, the attack and supply ships that held their widespread, if shrinking, empire together. Others built the flying discs that gave the Daleks their mobility on hostile terrain. Still more constructed the numerous devices used to level cities, enslave populations and annihilate millions. The weapon shops of Skaro never closed, and their output was astounding in both quantity and destructive capacity. Part of the shops was devoted solely to the fabrication of explosive devices, from small point-charges that could disable an enemy craft to planet-breaking bombs that were the weapon of last resort. Not out of kindness, but because a shattered world was more difficult to loot for its mineral treasures.

At the moment, though, the Black Dalek supervisor was interested in none of these production lines. It glided to a small area in the experimental section of the hive of factories. Here a small group of Dalek technicians were working on an odd-looking device. At first glance, it appeared to be little more than a metal archway, much like any doorframe in the city of Skaro. However, the frame had a series of square lights built into the sides and the lintel. Behind this was a compact machine, custom-designed and built for one task only. One of

the technicians was making final adjustments to the device as the Black Dalek glided over.

This was another of the black box constructions, similar to their time devices. It was on a framework that raised it to the perfect level for a Dalek to operate the many controls. Set into the top side of the box was a large glass container, about a foot in diameter and two feet high. It was filled with a milky liquid almost to the top. The surface of the liquid was smoking slightly, and the bulk of it frothed and bubbled. Set in the underside of the box was an identical glass container that was completely empty. Set into the machine itself were numerous glass rods and connecting tubes.

'Report!' the Dalek Supervisor ordered.

'Experiment ready,' the technician replied.

'Proceed.' The Black Dalek watched carefully as the experiment began.

The technician moved its manipulator arm across the controls on the black box. The low hum it had been giving off rose in pitch. The read-outs started to register the power drain and status of the device. As soon as these peaked, the Dalek triggered another control. The milky liquid started to drain slowly from the top container, being channelled into the body of the machine through the connecting tubes. The whine from the device rose higher, and the read-outs fluctuated wildly before stabilizing again.

From the tubing under the machine, a thick amber liquid began to flow into the bottom container. When this was full, the technician powered down the systems.

'Experiment complete,' it reported.

'Atomic weight?' demanded the Black Dalek.

The technician examined the read-outs. 'One hundred and ninety seven point two.'

'Specific gravity?'

'Nineteen point two nine.'

The Dalek Supervisor was satisfied. 'Repeat the experiment,' it ordered. The machine had to be functioning perfectly when it was required. With a last look at both the converter and the archway

beyond it, the Black Dalek moved away to make its report.

The lights above the door in the detention cell flashed.

Victoria looked up in despair. What new torture did the Daleks have in mind now? The door slid open with a clang, and she stared in astonishment and joy at the first person who stumbled into the cell. 'Papa!' she cried, rushing over to him. 'I thought I would never see you again.'

Waterfield clutched at his daughter, tears running down his face. 'I only wish that it could have been under better circumstances,' he sighed. 'I fear we are now all prisoners of the Daleks.'

'It doesn't matter at the moment,' Victoria told him. 'At least we are together once more.'

'Touching,' observed Maxtible cynically. He stood alone at the rear of the room.

Kemel clasped Jamie's hand as the young Scot entered.

The Doctor wandered in, still deep in thought. The Black Dalek touched the controls and the door slammed shut.

The Doctor leaned on the wall. He tapped the fingers of one hand in the palm of the other, then reached into his inside jacket pocket and pulled out his recorder. He always thought better when he could tootle. Putting the instrument to his lips, he started to play.

Maxtible paced up and down, glaring at the Waterfield reunion and avoiding meeting the glares of either Jamie or Kemel. Finally, he turned to the Doctor. 'Surely you at least can understand, Doctor?' he appealed. He seemed to be seeking some kind of absolution for his deeds. 'The secret of transformation, the power to transmute base metals into gold.'

Jamie stared at him in disgust, and turned to the Doctor. 'Do you mean he's worked against us all for that?'

The Doctor took the recorder from his lips for a moment. 'People have done worse for less, Jamie,' he said.

'Aye, but to sell us all out to the Daleks.' Jamie looked as if he were going to spit on Maxtible. 'Metal into gold.

Och, it's daft. No more than an old wives' tale.'

'Oh, I wouldn't say that.' The Doctor appeared in the mood for an argument. 'The alchemists of the Middle Ages on Earth made transmutation their main goal in life.'

'But they didn't succeed,' Jamie pointed out triumphantly.

Not giving up, the Doctor said. 'In the twentieth century, where we were trapped, the theory is considered scientifically possible. Inside an atomic reactor it is technically feasible.'

'Of course it is possible,' Maxtible retorted, with all the conviction of a revival preacher speaking of the fires of Hell.

Jamie glowered at him. 'I don't care whether it's possible or not,' he exclaimed. 'It's immoral to sell us out to the Daleks for such a process.'

'Whether it is or whether it isn't possible is all beside the point,' the Doctor stated.

'Oh?' Jamie was still feeling belligerent. 'And what is the point, then?'

Staring at Maxtible, the Doctor gestured with his recorder. 'Why the Daleks should tell you this secret.'

Maxtible glared at the Doctor. 'They promised me.'

The Doctor blew a sharp note on his instrument, then looked up mildly. 'The Daleks don't keep their promises.'

Maxtible shook his head, grinning like a shark. 'I see what you are trying to do, Doctor. But you cannot shake my belief in their integrity. I shall be told the secret.'

'It won't do you any good,' Jamie growled. He took a pace towards Maxtible. 'You won't be able to use your secret. I'll see to that.'

Maxtible saw the rage in Jamie's eyes and started to back away, fearful for his life. Jamie was beyond reasoning with now. They were all in deadly danger from the Daleks because of the greed of this stupid, pompous man. The Daleks might aim to kill them all, but Jamie was determined to see that Maxtible would pay first.

'Jamie,' the Doctor called, but his companion paid no heed. He advanced on Maxtible, who cowered back against the metal wall of the cell.

The lights above the door flickered, and the door opened. A Dalek slid into the cell, spinning to face Jamie.

'Move away,' it commanded. Jamie glared angrily at it. The Dalek raised its gun. 'Move!' it repeated.

Victoria had broken away from her father as the scene was being played out. Now she called, 'Please, Jamie, do as it says.'

The young Scot looked from Maxtible to the Dalek and then to Victoria. After a moment, he turned and marched to join Kemel on the other side of the room.

Moving slowly about the cell, the Dalek regarded each of the prisoners in turn. Then it halted beside Maxtible.

'You will not harm this being,' it ordered. Then it glided across to regard Victoria. She faced it with all the courage she could muster. 'Or you will be exterminated,' it finished.

'Yes, yes,' agreed the Doctor hastily. 'We understand.'

The Dalek turned and moved to stare at the Doctor.

Then it glided out of the room. The door clanged shut and the lights died.

Looking much more confident now, Maxtible glared at the others in the room. 'You would be well advised to do as they tell you,' he offered.

'Och, dinna worry,' Jamie replied. 'The thought of going anywhere near you again revolts me.' He turned his back on the financier.

As the Doctor began to play a slow, mournful air on his recorder, Waterfield moved slowly towards Maxtible.

'They seem to be prepared to protect you,' he observed in a neutral tone.

'Yes.' Maxtible peered at him warily. 'Be warned.'

'Then I appeal to you, Maxtible,' he cried. 'It still may not be too late. If these creatures are your friends, help us!'

Maxtible cast his eyes down. 'If you did,' Waterfield appealed, 'we could plan something, or try to escape!'

‘No!’ thundered Maxtible. How could this fool think he would give up his secret for them?

‘At least for Victoria’s sake,’ begged Waterfield. ‘After all you’ve done to her.’

‘No, I tell you!’ Maxtible roared. ‘No!’

Victoria laid a hand on Waterfield’s arm. ‘It’s no good, father,’ she told him. ‘He’s incapable of listening to us any more.’ Her father looked up at her with pain and despair in his eyes. Then he moved back to the bench and collapsed wearily. Victoria stared at him with concern, but she walked resolutely over to the Doctor. Though this was the first time that she had met him, there was something oddly comforting about his presence. Despite his clownish appearance, there seemed to be an underlying compassion, thoughtfulness and steel to him. He stopped his playing and smiled at her, then reached out and patted her hand comfortingly. ‘What have you been thinking?’ she asked him.

‘Trying to work out a problem,’ he answered. ‘The Daleks tell me I’m going to do something for them.

Something that I would rather die than do.’ He blew another few notes.

Victoria nodded towards Maxtible, who had moved to the tray of food that the Daleks had left them. It was bland and unappealing, but supposedly nutritional. The financier was eating it as if it were manna from heaven, glaring suspiciously at his fellow prisoners as he did so. ‘Perhaps the Daleks think that you are like him?’ Victoria suggested.

The Doctor shook his head. ‘No. The Daleks and I have fought on many occasions. They know me well enough by this time.’

‘They intend to persuade you, then?’ guessed Victoria.

‘No, it isn’t that, either.’ He stared at her and saw that she had courage and intelligence. There was no need to gloss over the truth. ‘You see, my dear, there isn’t a persuasion strong enough. Not even the offer of all the lives in this room.’

‘I see.’

‘Five lives for a whole planet?’ the Doctor amplified. ‘It isn’t a choice, is it?’

‘No,’ Victoria agreed, with complete conviction.

‘Even if I could trust the Daleks,’ the Doctor mused, speaking his thoughts aloud. It seemed to help him think, talking with Victoria. In some ways, she reminded him of his long-departed granddaughter, Susan. He had always enjoyed discussions with her, and they had inevitably been profitable. ‘Earth would be useless to us, if they set us free.’

He shrugged. ‘I could take us all to another universe, I suppose. Even to my own planet.’

‘Your own?’ asked Victoria sharply. She stared at him in astonishment.

‘Yes,’ he said, gently. ‘I come from a world a long way away from Earth.’ He often wondered if it would ever be possible for him to return there some day, after he had fled from the strict controls of its society. A thought struck him. ‘Just a minute,’ he told Victoria. He looked across the room. ‘Maxtible!’ He strode over to join the financier, who regarded him a little nervously, despite his faith in the protection of the Daleks. ‘Arthur Terrall,’ the Doctor said.

‘The Daleks put a control device on him.’

‘What of it?’ asked Maxtible.

‘Why only on Terrall?’

Maxtible snorted. ‘It was an error. It never really controlled his mind. He fought it constantly.’ Maxtible shrugged. ‘I always told them it would prove to be unsatisfactory.’

‘It was a good thing for you that it did fail,’ Jamie commented. ‘They’d have tried it on you next.’

This was what the Doctor had expected to hear. ‘So it can’t be that.’ He stood there, thinking furiously. He clasped his hands together and rapped his knuckles on his chin. ‘Then what is it? How do they think they’re going to get me to do what they want?’

The Dalek Supervisor moved into the control room and crossed to stand before the huge Emperor. The Emperor stared down at its black shape. ‘Report,’ it commanded.

‘The experiment is ready,’ the Supervisor answered.

‘Proceed,’ the Emperor ordered. The Supervisor turned and left the room. The Emperor felt satisfaction. The final stages of his intricate plan were coming to fruition. The Doctor had been trapped and forced to unwittingly serve the Dalek cause. Now he would be instrumental in spreading the Dalek factor through all of time and space, providing the experiment about to take place was a complete success. And of that the Emperor had no doubt at all.

Soon, very soon, the Daleks would conquer at last.

31

Transmutation

The Dalek Supervisor returned to the experimental section of the weapons shop. Now that the Emperor had given the order to proceed, all other projects were to move to stand-by status. Only the construction of the saucer fleet and the armaments were to be left unaffected. They would soon become necessary once the Dalek factor was spread throughout the history of the Earth by the Doctor. With the human race turned into Daleks, their long-time foes would become allies in the Dalek cause. Joined with the humans, the Daleks would be able to complete their mission of conquest and eradication.

The Supervisor halted beside the prototype dust cannon. It was a small, squat machine capable of pulverizing rocks and then spraying them in a fine mist from its barrel. The final version would be able to grind up asteroids into grains of space dust. This would make navigation for non-Dalek craft hazardous if not impossible.

At the speeds such combat ships flew, even a single grain of dust impacting on the hull could cause serious damage. A cloud of dust would annihilate a vessel, and would be virtually impossible to detect.

‘Discontinue work,’ the Black Dalek ordered. As it moved on, the small assembly team started to close down their operations.

The next device was a magnetron. This huge circular coil would be capable of producing such powerful magnetic fields through superconductivity that it would be able to draw passing starships out of the sky. ‘Discontinue work,’

the Supervisor ordered the workers. Immediately, they commenced shutdown of their equipment.

The Black Dalek moved on to the dreamwave. This glass cannon was

surrounded by powerful coils and a generator of immense power. Once it was completed, the device would be able to project emotional waves from orbit to blanket an entire world. The population could be infected with abject terror or dark, lingering, suicidal despair. The native forces would be incapable of withstanding a Dalek army in such a frame of mind.

'Discontinue work,' the Supervisor commanded and moved on.

A moment later, there was a lone Dalek voice: 'Why?'

The Black Dalek halted. Then it slowly turned to regard the construction crew. There were several Daleks in sight.

Which one had done the unthinkable? 'Who spoke?'

demanded the Supervisor.

The workers all ceased their procedures. One by one they moved to the edge of the assembly zone and looked at the Black Dalek. None replied.

'Who questioned a Dalek command?' the Supervisor grated.

Again, none of them replied. There was a moment of silence over the entire room, then a buzzer sounded beside the final area, where the new experiment was prepared.

The Black Dalek looked over each of the workers one by one. Then it moved on.

It was silent, but it felt deeply disturbed.

For the first time ever, a Dalek had questioned an order.

The lights above the door in the detention cell flashed again. Victoria had been conversing in low tones with her father while the Doctor played odd, discordant notes on his recorder. Both stopped as the door clanged open. In the doorway was one of the Black Daleks. Behind it, a trio of grey Daleks was setting a black box with two glass-like containers into place. The Doctor frowned as he noticed something odd.

Outside of the doorway, a second archway had been set up. This one had squarish lights set into its rim. What could that be? And why was it set up right outside the cell?

The Black Dalek passed through the arch and doorway and into the cell. It looked at each prisoner in turn before focusing its attention on Maxtible. ‘Are you ready?’ it asked.

‘Ready?’ The colour drained from Maxtible’s face.

Despite his bravado, he was not at all certain that the Daleks meant him well.

‘Now is the time for you to understand the greatest secret of the Daleks,’ the Black Dalek informed him.

‘Yes!’ exclaimed Maxtible eagerly. ‘The secret you promised me.’ He crowded forward to join the Black Dalek, smirking in triumph at his fellow prisoners. ‘The secret of transmuting metal.’

‘Turn and watch,’ the Black Dalek ordered.

Maxtible did as he was told. The three grey Daleks had finished setting up the machine, and were now powering it up. A rising hum was issuing from it, and the opaque liquid in the upper container was bubbling and smoking.

The lower container was empty. Another Black Dalek moved into position behind the machine. The panel facing the room flickered to life, with figures and settings illuminated from within. The Doctor moved a little closer, his face creased by a frown of puzzled concentration.

The Black Dalek beside Maxtible spoke. ‘Above, liquid metal,’ it announced. Indicating the glowing panel, it commanded. ‘Read.’

‘Wait a moment.’ Maxtible fumbled inside his jacket pocket and then produced a pair of wire-rimmed spectacles. Donning these, he started to take a step forward to see the readings better.

‘Do not move,’ the Dalek ordered, swinging its arm to block his way.

‘But it’s so hard to see,’ complained Maxtible, but halted as he was told. Leaning forward, he grasped his spectacles and moved them down his nose slightly. Peering through them, he managed to make out the figures. ‘Fifty five point eight four,’ he called out.

‘Atomic weight,’ the Black Dalek informed him. ‘Read the next figures.’

‘Seven point …’ He strained to make it out. ‘Eight four.’

‘Specific gravity,’ explained the Black Dalek.

The Doctor raised an eyebrow. ‘Atomic weight and specific gravity of iron,’ he murmured, intrigued.

‘Watch,’ the Black Dalek instructed Maxtible.

The Black Dalek beside the machine activated the device. The humming tone rose in volume as the liquid began to slowly drain from the top container. It swirled through the tubing and vanished into the black box. After a few more moments thick, amber-coloured liquid started to issue forth into the tubing at the base of the machine, seeping down into the bottom container. The read-outs on the side of the device flickered and then changed.

‘Read atomic weight,’ the Dalek beside Maxtible ordered him.

Peering forward, the financier read out: ‘Thirty seven point two seven.’

‘Read specific gravity,’ commanded the Dalek.

‘Four point seven two,’ Maxtible read aloud. Whipping off his spectacles, he threw his arms in the air triumphantly. ‘Gold!’ he cried. ‘Iron into gold!’ He spun about to laugh at the Doctor and Jamie. ‘I told you they could do it!’ he crowed. ‘Their promise is kept. I was sure of it. Sure of it!’

The Doctor gave him a look of disgusted pity. Maxtible had deluded himself utterly. He wanted to believe that the Daleks had kept their word. This ridiculous demonstration might be perfectly honest, but why should it be? The Doctor had seen con games pulled many times in many places in the universe. The, Daleks claimed that they had transformed liquid iron into liquid gold; but out of sight, in a closed box, where it could simply have been switched.

The readings could have easily been faked. But there was no point in saying any of this to Maxtible: he would never listen now.

The Dalek beside the financier moved through the doorway to join its colleague beside the device. Fixing its gaze on Maxtible, it said, ‘The machine is yours.’

With his face transformed by pure joy and greed, Maxtible stepped

forward. He was possessed now by his avarice, his caution and reason thrown to the winds.

'Maxtible!' the Doctor called. The other man paused and glanced back. 'If you value your life,' the Doctor said sharply, 'don't go anywhere near that machine.' He was filled with a grim certainty that this was another Dalek trick, and that the self-deluded financier was to be their next victim.

Maxtible smiled pityingly and shook his head. 'No, Doctor,' he said. 'I will listen to no more of your lies. The Daleks have proven their good intentions.' He stepped out of the door and under the archway.

Instantly all of the square lights in the frame lit up.

Maxtible froze on the spot, and looked up in shock. He twisted and squirmed, as if to free himself from the spot, but could not move. Jamie started forward to try and drag him back, but the Doctor grabbed his arm and shook his head.

'It's no use, Jamie,' he said sadly.

They and the others watched in horror. Maxtible was caught, like a fly in a web. No matter how he struggled, he could not get free. The air in the archway shimmered and puckered, making the man look as if he were bending and straightening at unnatural angles. Then the lights died, and Maxtible's head fell onto his chest and his shoulders sagged. He appeared to be asleep on his feet.

'What have they done to him?' whispered Victoria in a shocked voice.

Maxtible's head suddenly came up again, and he stood stiffly to attention. The Black Dalek looked at him. 'Turn,'

it instructed. Maxtible turned to the left. His eyes were open, but blank, his face drained of all emotion. His chest barely rose and fell as he breathed.

'Move to control,' the Black Dalek ordered.

'I obey,' replied Maxtible. His voice was now harsh and grating, devoid of expression. It was the voice of a Dalek.

'They've turned him into a Dalek!' exclaimed Jamie.

They watched as Maxtible marched down the corridor and out of

sight, followed by the second Black Dalek. The first Black Dalek turned to look back through the doorway at the prisoners.

'Yes,' it stated. 'The Dalek Factor.'

The Doctor stared at the archway in awe. 'And that's what you want me to do to the people of Earth?'

'Yes,' the Black Dalek replied again. After a pause, it added, 'We know you will obey.' Why they were so certain he would help was obvious: he would pass through the doorway, willingly or not, and undergo their conversion process. Once he had become a Dalek, he would be unable to refuse their orders. The Black Dalek watched them for another moment, then glided away.

As the prisoners stared at each other in mute shock, the three grey Daleks powered down the machine they had brought. It was on one of the floating pallets. Two of the Daleks manipulated it away, while the third remained outside the door. As soon as the others were gone, it turned and looked back through the archway. 'Doctor,' it grated.

The Doctor looked up from his worried thoughts.

'Mmm?'

'I am your friend,' the Dalek informed him.

'Are you now?' The Doctor looked at the Dalek through the archway. 'What is your name?'

'I am Alpha,' the Dalek replied. The Doctor could see that there was indeed a mark on its dome, but at this distance he couldn't tell if it was the one that he had made.

To get closer he would have to pass underneath the archway.

The Black Dalek returned and stared at the Dalek. 'Why are you here?' it demanded.

'I am guarding the prisoners,' the Dalek replied.

'That is not necessary,' the Black Dalek stated. 'Return to your work.'

'I obey.' The grey Dalek moved off. The Black Dalek watched it retreat, then triggered the door mechanism.

With the mechanical grinding sound, it slid closed.

Jamie stared at the Doctor. ‘Was that one of your test Daleks?’ he asked. The Doctor shook his head uncertainly.

‘Or was it a trap?’

‘A trap?’ asked the Doctor, sounding confused.

‘Aye,’ Jamie explained. ‘To make you go through that doorway.’

The Doctor turned back to the door and stared at it thought-fully. ‘Interesting,’ he murmured.

‘What are you talking about? Interesting?’ asked Jamie indignantly. ‘You do that and you’ll turn into a Dalek, just like yon Maxtible.’

‘Yes,’ mused the Doctor. ‘Human beings into Daleks.’

He rubbed his chin and then wandered across the room, deep in his own thoughts. There was an odd light in his eyes, almost as if he were excited about something. Jamie shook his head and stared at the Doctor. Ever since this whole thing had begun, the Doctor had been acting very oddly. Now it seemed as if he had gone completely off the deep end.

Maxtible marched into the control room, followed by a Black Dalek. Together they moved to stand before the impressive form of the Emperor. From on high, its eye looked down at them.

‘What of the experiment?’ the Emperor asked.

‘Successful,’ the Black Dalek responded.

‘This human possesses the Dalek factor?’ The Emperor stared with satisfaction down at Maxtible.

‘Yes.’

‘Does the human Dalek know the plan?’ the Emperor enquired.

Taking a step forward, Maxtible answered, ‘Yes. And I will obey.’

‘Go,’ ordered the Emperor. He watched as Maxtible spun about and marched out of the control room.

The Black Dalek remained. ‘Emperor,’ it began.

‘Speak.’

‘A Dalek questioned an order,’ it reported.

‘Questioned?’ The Emperor considered the matter. The Doctor had been right, it seemed. ‘Then it was one of the test Daleks.’

‘Yes,’ agreed the Black Dalek.

‘Find it,’ the Emperor ordered. ‘Immediately.’ There was no chance that the Doctor’s prediction of the end of the Daleks coming true with only three Daleks infected, but it was time to take action against those three. If they could not be reassimilated into the Dalek race, then they must be destroyed.

Several hours later, the lights were dimmed in the detention room. The five weary prisoners settled down to get whatever rest they could. It was not easy, given the uncertainty of their fate, to fall asleep, but Waterfield fell into a fitful doze quickly. He was still suffering from the blow to the head that Maxtible had dealt him. Both Victoria and the Doctor were concerned for his health. He really needed to see a physician, but there was absolutely no chance of the Daleks even considering the idea.

Jamie was the next to fall asleep. He was utterly exhausted after two days of continuous activity, and from having missed any rest the previous night. Kemel dozed beside his friend. Victoria was the last of them to drop off to sleep, tormented by worry for her father’s health and her nerves still very much on edge after her ordeal.

The Doctor smiled slightly as he watched them rest.

Then his own eyelids drooped and closed. A few minutes later, he was snoring softly, propped up against a wall, his chin resting on his chest.

The door to the cell opened silently for once. In the doorway stood Maxtible, the lights in the corridor behind him muted. On a small trolley beside him was a monitor screen. He looked about the room and then stepped inside.

Removing the jewelled pendant from his pocket, he crossed to where the Doctor was sitting against the wall. As he approached, the Doctor blearily raised his head, blinking.

Spinning the pendant, Maxtible let the flickering lights play across the Doctor’s face. ‘Doctor,’ he said softly, ‘you are asleep still, but you can hear my voice. Stand. Open your eyes.’ The Doctor did as he was instructed. Maxtible kept the jewel spinning and flashing. ‘Doctor,

look at the screen.' He gestured to the monitor on the cart outside the door. It sprang to life. 'I have come to help you escape,' he murmured. 'Doctor, look at the box.'

The Doctor turned to stare at the box. On the screen a familiar shape took form. 'My TARDIS,' he said softly.

The picture showed it standing on the mountainside where he, Jamie and Waterfield had materialized.

'I have had your TARDIS moved outside the city,'

Maxtible said encouragingly. 'I will now take you to it.

Come, Doctor, follow me.' He walked slowly backwards through the door, holding his pendant in front of the Doctor's face. The Doctor followed him as if the jewel were a leash.

Something had woken Jamie from his slumber, and he had heard Maxtible's voice. He opened his tired eyes in time to see the Doctor being drawn towards the doorway.

'Doctor!' he called out, but the little man showed no signs of havng heard him. 'No, Doctor!' he cried, getting to his feet. 'Don't go through that door!'

The noise wakened the others in the room, but the Doctor seemed to hear nothing but Maxtible's gentle encouragement. Before Jamie could act, the Doctor stepped through the archway.

Instantly, the lights in the metal framework flashed on.

The Doctor stood still, bending and swaying. The air puckered and rippled, shimmering across the Doctor's body. Then the lights dimmed, and the Doctor took a further step to join Maxtible.

Jamie stood just inside the doorway, his eyes wide with shock. 'Doctor!' he called in despair.

The Doctor turned and looked at him. There was no emotion on his face, and his eyes were devoid of intelligence. 'Stay where you are,' he grated. His voice was like that of a Dalek now. 'That is an order.'

Jamie staggered back, his face twisted with horror.

Maxtible smiled, without warmth. 'We will work on the Dalek factor together,' he stated. 'Follow me.'

The Doctor turned back. ‘I obey.’ Together they strode off down the corridor. The door closed behind them.

In the cell, Jamie sank to the floor in despair. Neither Victoria nor Waterfield said a word; they were too shocked. Sick to his stomach, Jamie wondered what chance any of them had now. The Doctor had become a Dalek.

What hope was there for them now?

32

The Dalek Doctor

Maxtible led the Doctor into the weapon shop. The experimental area was now closed down, but construction on the Dalek saucers and flying discs were still ongoing.

The Doctor looked neither left nor right, following Maxtible closely as he led the way to the far end of the factory. Here there were large computers working away by themselves. Maxtible pointed these out to the Doctor.

‘Those are working on the methods for mass production of the Dalek factor,’ he explained. From a small table he picked up a recording capsule similar in every way to the ones the Doctor had implanted in the three experimental Daleks. He handed this to the Doctor, who began to examine it carefully. ‘This contains the memory wire for the Dalek factor,’ Maxtible explained. ‘The computers will reproduce the thought patterns from this recording into a vapour formula. This vapour will be sprayed into the atmosphere of the Earth. It will turn the human race into Daleks.’

The Doctor nodded to show his understanding. ‘I must study the machine,’ he said.

‘Do so.’ Maxtible moved away, allowing the Doctor access to the computers. He bent to examine them with great care. It was imperative that he fully understand its function.

Victoria stooped beside Jamie on the floor of their cell. She placed a hand on his shoulder. ‘Don’t give up, Jamie, please,’ she begged him. ‘I couldn’t bear it if we had no hope.’

‘No,’ he replied, but there was no life in his voice and no hope in his eyes.

Victoria rose to her feet, sighing. If Jamie had lost hope, what could she alone do? She glanced back to where her father and Kemel were seated on the bench. Kemel looked as untired and impassive as ever. Her father, though, had a greyish pallor to his face. He really was not well, and she could not help fearing for him. Then again, while they were still prisoners of the Daleks, she feared for all of them.

'Is there any water left?' she asked.

'A little,' her father replied. He lifted the metal jug, only to find it was empty. There were a few mouthfuls left in one cup, which he handed to her. She sipped it gratefully.

Waterfield glanced over at the dispirited Jamie. 'He's taking it very badly.'

'Yes,' agreed Victoria. She took the little water remaining in the cup across to Jamie. He looked up and managed a wan smile. The he shook his head slightly before returning to his gloom. Victoria stared at him in concern. With the Doctor gone and her father injured, it was up to Jamie now to lead their small group. But he seemed to have lost all will to act now that the Daleks had converted the Doctor to their cause.

The Doctor finished examining the computers. He straightened up and looked over at Maxtible. 'Is this the same process used for the Dalek factor in the archway?' he asked.

'No,' replied Maxtible. 'The vapour is for remote action.

The archway converter is for individual conversion. It works on an electronic principle.'

'I must also understand that,' the Doctor said.

'Agreed,' replied Maxtible. 'I have work to do here. You will examine the archway alone.'

'I obey.' The Doctor moved off stiffly through the machine shop and back to the cell. There he halted and began to study the conversion unit. The mechanism was simple enough. It took the mental patterns recorded on the silver wire and transformed them into electronic pulses that were then encoded in the brain of the individual stepping under the arch. The vapour worked through carrying the pulses encoded in its molecules.

There was a small access panel on the left hand side of the archway that he removed using the rusty blade of his screw-driver. Inside the gap was nestled one of the small capsules.

This was the source of the Dalek factor. The Doctor took it out and slipped it into his inside pocket. From his right jacket pocket he took a capsule and inserted it into the gap in the machine. Then he closed the panel. He looked around, but there were neither Daleks nor Maxtible to be seen. There was a monitor camera in the wall, but his body had covered his actions from the device.

Reaching through the archway, he tapped gently on the cell door. 'Jamie,' he called softly. 'Jamie, can you hear me?' His voice was completely normal.

After a moment, he heard Jamie call back, 'Yes.'

'Good,' he replied. 'When I tell you, bring the others through the archway door.'

There was a pause. Then: ' *What?* '

'Through the door,' the Doctor repeated. 'Trust me.'

There was a noise behind him, and he looked around. A Black Dalek was gliding down the corridor towards him.

He straightened up and started to move towards it.

'What are you doing?' the Black Dalek demanded.

'I have been examining the Dalek factor converter,' the Doctor said in his Dalek voice. 'Take me now to the Emperor.'

The Black Dalek stared at him, obviously suspicious.

'Wait,' it ordered. It moved to stand beside the archway, then extended its arm to the door controls. Its manipulator disc passed across the photo-electric eye and the door clanged open. The Black Dalek gazed at each of the four remaining prisoners in turn, verifying that they were still all present.

What the Dalek did not see was the Doctor standing behind it giving a slow wink to the astonished prisoners.

Satisfied that all was well, the Black Dalek closed the door once again.

Inside the cell, Victoria looked at Jamie, wide-eyed. ‘Did you see that?’ she asked. ‘He winked at us.’

‘Aye,’ agreed Jamie, confused.

‘But he walked through the door earlier,’ she said, ‘just as Maxtible did.’

‘Then he must have been affected by the process, just as Maxtible was,’ her father said. ‘Surely he must.’

Jamie scratched his head. ‘But we heard him speak normally just now,’ he pointed out.

‘It’s another trap,’ suggested Waterfield uncertainly.

‘The Daleks are trying to make us walk through the archway.’

‘But why?’ argued Jamie. ‘They could just push us through any time if that’s what they wanted.’

‘Then why haven’t they?’ asked Waterfield.

Eagerly, Victoria, said, ‘Do you think there’s a chance?

That the Doctor somehow wasn’t affected? That there is something to hope for?’

‘I don’t know,’ Jamie admitted. ‘I can’t understand it. I mean, how can we be sure that we can trust him?’ He looked at them all, but neither Waterfield nor Victoria nor Kemel could think of any reply.

That was the entire problem. The Doctor had asked them to trust him, but could they possibly take that risk?

The Doctor marched into the control room and across to the Emperor. Maxtible and the Black Dalek followed closely behind. The Emperor gazed down on the figures before him.

‘What do you want?’ he demanded.

The Doctor stared back. ‘A Dalek questioned an order,’

he stated.

‘Again?’ The Emperor looked at the Black Dalek. ‘I ordered that the three renegade Daleks be located. Why has this not been done?’

‘We have searched without success,’ Maxtible said in reply.

The Doctor gave Maxtible and the Black Dalek a severe look. ‘That is unacceptable,’ he grated. ‘The three Daleks were given marks. Why can you not find them?’

The Black Dalek’s eye-stick covered the Doctor, then moved on to look up at the Emperor. ‘We have located thirty seven Daleks with these markings. All report that they were made by another Dalek. All have been removed for further questioning.’

‘The renegade Daleks are obviously very intelligent,’ the Doctor said. ‘They are marking non-infected Daleks to cause confusion.’

‘That is apparent,’ the Emperor complained. He sounded annoyed by the set-back.

‘Then all Daleks must be ordered to pass through the arch-way door,’ the Doctor replied. ‘Loyal Daleks will be unaffected. The Daleks with the human factor will become Daleks again due to the Dalek factor. They will become as this human and I have become.’

‘Let it be done,’ the Emperor agreed.

‘I obey,’ the Doctor stated.

The Emperor’s eye moved to focus on Maxtible. ‘You will be responsible for the Dalek conversion of the remaining human prisoners. This is to be done immediately.’

‘I obey,’ Maxtible confirmed. Together they marched out of the control room.

In the corridor by the cell, the Doctor had the archway door moved away from the cell door by three of the worker Daleks. They set it up in the centre of the corridor, then looked to the Doctor for further orders.

‘You will all pass through the archway,’ he informed them.

‘I obey,’ they said in unison. The first moved through.

The lights flashed and the air shimmered. The Dalek paused momentarily, confused, and then rolled on. The second and third followed it.

The city-wide intercom units sprang to life. ‘This is the Emperor. All

Daleks are to report to Corridor Nine by units. Every Dalek will pass through the portal there.

Obey!'

Maxtible started for the door of the cell, but the Doctor moved to block him. 'I will fetch the prisoners,' he said.

'They will obey me. They will not listen to you.'

'Agreed.' Maxtible nodded once, and then departed down the corridor.

The Doctor moved to the cell door, and then passed his hand across the optical scanner. The door grated open. The four prisoners inside stared at him warily. 'Quick,' he said to them in his normal voice. 'All of you, follow the Daleks through the archway door.'

Jamie glowered at him. 'Aye? And become Daleks, too?

No, thank you.'

'It's all right, Jamie,' the Doctor explained. 'I changed over the factors.' He took the capsule he had removed from the equipment out of his pocket. 'This contains the Dalek factor. When I finished my experiment with the first three Daleks, I made a fourth capsule, just in case. That is now inside the equipment. I'm giving all of the Daleks that pass through it the human factor.' He glared at them impatiently. 'Come on, come on! They're bound to catch on soon.'

When they seemed reluctant to move, the Doctor grabbed Jamie and shoved him into the corridor.

Waterfield, Victoria and Kemel followed them out more slowly. It was quite clear that they did not trust the Doctor.

He sighed rather theatrically, and pulled a small object from his pocket which he handed to Jamie. It was a piece of metal foil about four inches square. 'That's a map of the Dalek city I picked up in their machine shop,' he explained. 'You must use it to take the others back to the tunnels we entered the city by. Maxtible had the TARDIS

moved out of the city to the mountainside where we landed.'

Jamie took the map uncertainly. 'Aren't you coming?'

he asked.

The Doctor shook his head. ‘No. I’ve got a little job to do. Once you’ve passed through that archway, the Daleks won’t try and stop you. They’ll think you all have the Dalek factor. If they give you any order, keep a straight face and tell them you’ll obey. Then keep going.’ He smiled. ‘Besides, I’ve been through the archway once already.’

‘So why didn’t it work on you?’ asked Jamie.

‘Because the Dalek factor was calibrated from you, Jamie,’ the Doctor explained. ‘It will work on all humans –

but I don’t come from Earth. It couldn’t affect me.’

Jamie grinned at him. ‘You wily devil.’ He turned to face the archway, through which a steady stream of Daleks was passing. ‘Well, here goes.’ Taking a deep breath, he moved into line and passed under the arch. The lights flashed, and he winced. The air rippled, and then he was through. Then he returned to his companions. ‘It’s all right,’ he told them, quietly. ‘Nothing happened to me. It’s safe.’

Victoria chewed her lower lip thoughtfully. Could she be sure of this? Or had Jamie been converted as well, and this was a plot to get the others through? She knew she was becoming almost insanely suspicious, but with the Daleks involved, she could hardly say that anything was impossible. But both Jamie and the Doctor had seemed perfectly normal, while Maxtible was glassy-eyed and emotionless. Or was that just an act to lull their suspicions?

She wished she could decide.

Finally, she realized that what Jamie had said earlier was perfectly true. If the Daleks wanted to, they could simply force her to walk through the arch. There was no need for subtlety along the lines she was dreading. And the Daleks did not bother being subtle if they did not have to be so. Screwing up her courage, she stepped quickly through the archway. She felt a tingling in her skin as the air rippled, but there was no other change. The Doctor and Jamie had been telling the truth. Kemel and her father followed her through.

‘Right,’ said Jamie, looking at the metallic map. ‘Come on.’

Waterfield shook his head. ‘I shall help the Doctor,’ he said firmly. He clasped his daughter’s hand. ‘Victoria, go with Jamie and Kemel. Take care of yourself.’

‘Don’t be daft, man,’ Jamie exclaimed.

‘Father . . .’ Victoria had a terrible feeling that if she let him out of her sight, she would never see him again.

‘I must find Maxtible,’ Waterfield said, brooking no argument. ‘He is to blame for all of this. If I am to atone for my part, I must settle with him.’

‘But—’ Victoria began.

‘No. Hurry along with Jamie.’ Waterfield smiled fondly at his daughter. ‘You three must make certain that our retreat to the Doctor’s TARDIS is safe. Once we are done, we shall join you.’

Victoria might still have argued, but Jamie grabbed her hand. ‘He’ll be all right,’ he said. ‘And we’d better be off before the Daleks catch onto the Doctor’s little scheme.

Come on.’ He and Kemel had to half-drag her away as Waterfield hurried in the other direction, hoping to catch up with the Doctor. Then he was gone from sight. Victoria sighed and stopped resisting.

They passed several Daleks which ignored the humans completely. They seemed to be moving about restlessly, confused.

‘Dizzy,’ one of them said, in a voice with almost human tones.

‘Dizzy,’ agreed its neighbour, spinning about.

‘Dizzy Dalek,’ said a third. Jamie gave them an odd look. It appeared that the human factor was starting to work on these Daleks, causing them headaches, but not as many as it was going to cause. The Daleks were still milling about as Jamie, Victoria and Kemel left.

A few moments later, one of the Black Daleks approached the archway. The first batch of Daleks had gone through, and there was now a pause in the processing.

The Black Dalek addressed one of the Daleks that had passed through the con-version. ‘Where are the prisoners?’

‘I do not know,’ the Dalek replied.

The Black Dalek paused. It was not a standard response, but it was not sufficiently bizarre to be a problem.

‘Continue working,’ it ordered. It was about to move back the way it had come when the Dalek spoke.

‘Why?’

The Black Dalek looked at the worker. A second worker Dalek turned to stare back. ‘Yes,’ it said. ‘Why?’

The other Daleks that had been moving restlessly around

now focused on the discussion. ‘Why?’ ‘Why?’ ‘Why?’

‘Do not question,’ the Black Dalek ordered the first worker.

‘Why?’ it responded.

‘Yes, why?’ asked the second.

‘Why not question?’ asked a third.

‘Silence!’ the Black Dalek said. The situation was getting worse, without apparent reason. ‘You will obey!’

The first Dalek stared back. ‘I will not obey,’ it replied.

This was too much. The Black Dalek fired at the rebel.

The worker spun about, and crashed into the wall. Its appendages drooped and its circuitry crackled. Two of the other Daleks moved to examine it. One of them looked up.

‘You have killed it,’ it stated.

‘You will obey without question!’ the Black Dalek insisted. The two Daleks fired at the Black Dalek. With a strangled electronic scream, it spun about, flames spewing from its mid-section. Then it crashed into the wall, fire licking at its casing, dead.

‘We will not obey without question,’ one of the Daleks responded. The other Daleks moved to join these two.

Then they moved down the corridor, each one staring at both dead Daleks as they passed. Every one of the Daleks was deep in troubled thoughts.

33

The End Of The Daleks?

The Doctor stepped out in front of the Daleks. ‘Quickly!’

he called. ‘This way. Follow me.’ He gestured at them.

‘Why?’ asked one of the Daleks.

‘Why follow you?’

‘Why quickly?’

The Doctor sighed. That was the trouble with encouraging questions. The Daleks wanted answers for everything, from everyone. ‘Follow me and I will show you the answers to all of your questions,’ he replied.

The Daleks looked at each other. ‘Very well,’ the one in the lead agreed. ‘We want answers to our questions.’

‘Why?’ asked another.

Shaking his head ruefully, the Doctor led his ragtag band along down the corridor. As they rounded the corner, they saw a Black Dalek barring their way.

‘Return to your work,’ it commanded.

‘Why?’ asked one of the Daleks with the Doctor.

‘Do not question,’ the Black Dalek ordered.

‘Why shouldn’t they ask questions?’ the Doctor demanded. That got an approving chorus from his group.

‘What work is it? What is the purpose? Who is it for? Tell them,’ he challenged.

‘Silence!’ insisted the Black Dalek.

‘Explain that,’ one of the workers requested.

‘What work?’ another asked.

‘Why obey without question?’ added a third.

‘Ask the Emperor,’ suggested the Doctor slyly. ‘He’s in charge. He must know all the answers.’

‘Yes,’ agreed the Dalek beside him. ‘Ask the Emperor.’

It started to move forward.

‘Keep back,’ the Black Dalek insisted. ‘You cannot pass.’

‘Why not?’ asked the Dalek. This was chorused as the others pressed forward to join the first. ‘The Emperor must explain.’

The Black Dalek gave up arguing. It opened fire on the first Dalek, which whirled about and exploded.

‘Defend yourselves!’ the Doctor cried. ‘The Black Daleks are destroying you.’

Instantly, three of the Daleks with him opened fire on the Black Dalek. Its top half erupted into flames, showering blazing metal and circuitry about the corridor.

In the wreckage, the Dalek life-form quivered and died. A putrid stench filled the corridor.

‘On to the Emperor!’ the Doctor called.

‘Yes!’ the Daleks chorused.

‘He must explain,’ one began, and the others took it up as a chant as they moved past the burning Dalek debris.

In the control room, an alarm began sounding as the monitor Daleks recorded the destruction. The Emperor stared at the screens, and knew that the moment of crisis had arrived. Triggering the city-wide intercom, he ordered,

‘All Black Daleks to control. Exterminate opposition.

Destroy all rebels.’

As the order reverberated about the corridors, the Black Daleks moved to obey. Even as they did, there were Dalek voices all about: ‘Why?’

‘Why destroy?’

‘Why not rebel?’

Firing as they moved, the Black Daleks began to converge on the control centre. Many of the Daleks opened fire in return. The others stood by, uncertain what they should do, waiting for orders.

The Doctor had managed to lead his band of argumentative Daleks down to the control area. ‘Now!’ he told them. ‘You’re here. You must

act decisively.'

'Why?' asked one Dalek.

Another said, 'I will obey.'

'But not without question,' a third added.

'That's right,' the Doctor told them enthusiastically.

'Ask questions.'

'Why?'

As the Doctor struggled to convince his party, a Black Dalek moved into the corridor behind him. Its gun-stick came up, to centre on his back. The Dalek prepared to fire.

Then everything went black. A piece of cloth had been thrown over its eye-stick. The Black Dalek crashed from side to side, attempting to shake the offending obstacle free.

'Doctor!' called Waterfield urgently. He had slipped his jacket over the Dalek from behind. Now he slipped past it to join the rebels.

The Doctor nodded at him. 'The Black Daleks are attacking you,' he explained to the worker Daleks.

'Hurry, man!' urged Waterfield. 'There are more on the way.'

Quickly, the Doctor tried to make his point. 'The Emperor has ordered them to destroy you.'

'Why?'

'Because you question,' he informed them. 'Defend yourselves. Destroy the Emperor, or be destroyed yourselves.'

'Yes,' agreed one of the Daleks. 'The Emperor must justify himself.'

'No,' one of the other Daleks argued. 'The Emperor must die.'

'Why?'

Waterfield had reached the Doctor. More and more of the converted worker Daleks appeared, moving towards the control room with steady purpose. 'We must go,'

Waterfield said.

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor, staring at his small band of rebels. They had reached a consensus and were advancing down the corridor towards the control room. As Black Daleks appeared to block their way, gunfire erupted. ‘Oh, my!’ The Doctor spun about. ‘I’ve finished now,’ he agreed.

The Black Dalek behind them finally managed to free itself of the jacket. As the piece of clothing fell free, the Black Dalek opened fire on the Doctor and Waterfield.

Moving with surprising speed, Waterfield managed to push the Doctor to one side, out of reach of the ray burst, but was caught in the periphery of the deadly radiation and fell limply to the floor. One of the worker Daleks spun around at the noise and fired at the Black Dalek.

Exploding, the Black Dalek slammed into a wall.

The Doctor fell on his knees beside Waterfield. ‘Lie still,’ he urged. ‘I’ll get some help.’

‘No’ Waterfield barely managed to shake his head. ‘No time for help.’ He knew that he was dying. There was no need to pretend.

The Doctor understood. ‘You saved my life,’ he said quietly.

Managing a slight smile, Waterfield nodded. ‘Yes,’ he gasped. ‘A good life to save.’ Pain spasmed through his body and he winced. ‘Please . . . you must . . .’ He bit back the scream building inside him. ‘Please . . . Victoria . . .’

‘Don’t worry about Victoria,’ the Doctor replied. ‘She’ll be safe with us, I promise you. Have no fear.’

‘Thank . . .’ Waterfield groaned. ‘No time . . .’ With a final shudder, he collapsed and lay still.

The Doctor looked down at him sadly. Waterfield had been a good man, and had died nobly. It was up to him now to see that it had not been in vain. He looked up as another group of Daleks moved into the corridor.

‘The Emperor has ordered your destruction,’ he informed them, getting to his feet.

‘Why?’ asked the lead Dalek.

‘Because you ask why,’ the Doctor answered. He pointed to the control room. ‘Your friends are in there, fighting for you.’

‘Friends,’ said the Dalek. ‘Friends!’

‘Yes, friends.’ The Doctor gestured. ‘Down there. Help them.’

‘Help our friends,’ agreed the Dalek. The others with him chorused their approval. They moved on past the Doctor.

He stared after them. He desperately wanted to be there at the end, but he had a promise to Waterfield to keep.

With regret, he turned and hurried back down the corridor.

By the time that the new group of converted Daleks arrived in the control room, it was already the site of a raging battle. The first group of Daleks with the human factor had been attacked as they entered by the Black Daleks. The workers had scattered, firing as they moved. The monitor Daleks tried to continue their work, but this proved impossible. Random shots ignited the map screen which exploded outwards, showering the fighting Daleks with glass and flames. As the monitors tried to extinguish the blaze, they came under fire from both sides. The Black Daleks were unable to tell which of the grey Daleks had been converted, so they simply attacked any non-Black Dalek.

The Emperor watched the fighting with growing alarm.

Somehow, the Doctor’s initial prediction had come true: Daleks were questioning orders and the once harmonious city was degenerating into a series of battles. Fighting anywhere at all was bad enough, but in here it could be disastrous. ‘Danger!’ he boomed. ‘Do not fight in here.

Drive them out!’ he ordered the Black Daleks. ‘There is danger! Danger! Obey me! Do not fight in here!’

The Black Daleks attempted to form a cordon across the control room and contain the grey Daleks. It was doomed to failure. Another of the control computers short-circuited and exploded. Several monitor Daleks were caught in the blast and hurled across the room. They crashed into other panels and erupted in flames. In the smoke and fire, it was becoming hard to pick out targets. Everywhere, Daleks were being destroyed in the shooting or in the growing number of

explosions.

One of the cables attached to the Emperor received the full burst of a stray blast. The wires ignited, and the cable broke free, hissing and fusing. The Emperor closed down the affected circuits and then jettisoned the cable. He had several back-ups built into his survival equipment, but if the fighting kept up, they would not prove to be enough.

He began ordering all loyal Daleks to the control room to protect him.

Jamie grinned happily as he and Kemel helped Victoria into the rock passage beside the conduits. He was inordinately relieved to see the dangerous pathway again.

The TARDIS lay only a short distance away now. The three of them settled down to wait, staring about them at the Dalek machines. ‘What is this place?’ asked Victoria, curiously.

‘According to the Doctor, it’s where the Daleks get their water,’ Jamie explained. ‘They need it to cool off their generators or something.’

Victoria’s eyes sparkled. ‘Is there a way to stop up the flow?’ she asked.

Grinning crazily, Jamie leapt to his feet. ‘I don’t know,’

he replied. He surveyed the huge panels of instruments in front of them. ‘But I’ll bet we could do a fair bit of damage.’

Kemel nodded. He strode to one of the supports; a metal pole about six feet high and three or four inches thick. Gripping it firmly, Kemel began to tear it free. His muscles bulged and his face registered the strain he was under. Then the rock at the base of the pole cracked and crumbled away. The pole tore free. Gripping it at one end, Kemel carried it over to the closest of the water pumps.

Taking a swing, he brought the metal pole down with all his might on the panel.

Under this onslaught, the panel shattered. Electronic innards spewed forth, and the circuitry fused. Jamie and Victoria wrenched free smaller rods and joined in the orgy of destruction. In the space of a few minutes, the entire pump room was a ruin.

‘Well,’ said Jamie, ‘that should turn the heat up in this place.’ He

threw aside his makeshift bat.

Victoria gave him a smile. ‘I feel a lot better after that,’

she admitted, breathing heavily. ‘I’ve been longing to smash something for quite some time.’ Kemel nodded his agreement.

There was the sound of footsteps in the corridor. ‘This’ll be the Doctor,’ Jamie observed. ‘Or your father,’ he added to Victoria. The footsteps grew louder.

Maxtible entered the ruined room. His eyes fixed on the trio, and his arms reached out towards them. ‘Kill!’ he cried. ‘Exterminate! Kill!’ He rushed toward them, his hands seeking a target.

‘He’s gone completely crazy!’ Jamie yelled. Kemel ran to intercept his former master, as Jamie grabbed Victoria and pulled her out of Maxtible’s way.

The Turk and the financier clashed at the edge of the passageway. Despite Kemel’s amazing strength, he did not manage to stop Maxtible. The Dalek factor seemed to have increased the man’s strength and he was burning with the hatred for humans that possessed all Daleks. Kemel was forced backwards, step by step. Behind him was the great chasm, but the bridge across it was ten feet to his left. With strength born of dire necessity, Kemel struggled to break Maxtible’s iron grip, and succeeded too well. As he pulled away from the madman, his foot slipped and he teetered on the brink of the abyss.

With a snarl, Maxtible lashed out, pushing the giant over the edge. Silently, Kemel fell backwards into the yawning chasm.

Jamie stared horror as his friend plunged to his death many thousands of feet below. Filled with rage, he was about to attack Maxtible himself. Victoria held him back.

‘It’s no use, Jamie,’ she cried. ‘He’s filled with an inhuman force. He’ll only kill you if you try and fight.’

The idea of retreating stuck in Jamie’s craw, but he realized that Victoria as right. If Kemel could not withstand the possessed man he would not stand a chance.

Much as he hated it, his best course was to retreat across the chasm and protect Victoria.

Maxtible turned, the burning rage still on his face.

'Kill!' he howled and started towards them. Then he paused. In the distance came the wail of a siren. Maxtible turned and rushed back the way he had come.

The Emperor watched the control room degenerating into chaos, unable to interfere physically. In order to expand its brain, it had entirely given up the power of mobility and was utterly dependent on the machinery around it to sustain its life. It had considered its mobility a small price to pay for what it had become. Now none of its mental powers could help. It needed desperately to be able to move, and could not.

'All Daleks report to control!' it ordered on the intercoms throughout the city. 'Emergency! Emergency!

All Daleks to control!'

The bank of video screens blew out, adding to the carnage in the room. Flames ate at all the wall panels now.

Metal was melting and running. Glass was exploding.

Wires were burning and causing further power failures.

Another of the power cables connected to the Emperor broke and began to burn.

All over the city, the temperature began to rise as the cooling systems malfunctioned. The fires that burned could not be doused, and they grew uncontrollably. Black Daleks fired on any moving thing. The converted Daleks fought back, forcing their way closer and closer to the Emperor.

Maxtible charged through the carnage, miraculously keeping his footing and his life. Both sides in the fighting were concentrating on each other; neither cared about the few humans on the loose. He ploughed past the Doctor, intent on returning to the control room as he was ordered.

'The Daleks shall not be – must not be – destroyed!' he yelled. 'The race will survive! The Daleks will live and rule forever!'

He burst into the control room and stared around.

Smoke and flames were everywhere. He looked at the Emperor, barely visible at the far end of the room. All of its cables were burning now. The support frames were buckling under the heat. The Emperor was screaming wordlessly as molten metal dripped down on its vast braincase. Its life supports closed down, overheating. The power cables severed and blazed briefly. Parts of its casing crumpled to the ground.

A vast explosion tore through the room, and the final sections of the Emperor's support collapsed. The immense machine toppled and shattered. The huge, mutated carcass of the Emperor, charred and smoking, sizzled as it fell into a pool of blazing lubricant.

Inside the weapons room, the saucers under construction had fallen from the assembly belt. Fires raged about them. The Black Daleks had cornered several of the workers here and were exterminating them ruthlessly. One of the few surviving workers turned to face the stockpile of explosives and opened fire.

An immense fireball annihilated the entire weapons section of the city. Around its ruin, the rest of the city burned.

The Doctor threw himself into the pipe room. Behind him, a series of explosions marked the collapse of one of the taller buildings. He hurried down to the bridge across the chasm and saw with huge relief that Jamie and Victoria were waiting on the metal pathway.

'Doctor!' Jamie called.

'Stay there!' the Doctor yelled. He ran onto one of the two metal rods that spanned the gulf. Throwing out his arms, he started across, wobbling precariously. He had almost made the perilous trip when an immense explosion rocked the ground. The rod beneath his feet buckled and twisted. Desperately he threw himself forward, but he could see that he would miss the edge of the path by inches.

Then he felt Jamie's firm grip on his wrist. For a brief second he dangled over the chasm, but then his feet found purchase and with the aid of his young friend he scrambled to safety. He grinned his thanks, then realized that there was someone missing. 'Where's Kemel?'

'Maxtible killed him,' Jamie said, with a scowl.

Victoria grabbed the Doctor's arm. 'Where is my father?' she demanded. Then, seeing the look on the Doctor's face, her heart sank. 'Is he dead?'

‘Yes,’ the Doctor sad sadly. ‘But he didn’t die in vain.’

He pointed across the abyss, and at the tunnel leading to the Dalek city. They could see everything within the passageway being consumed in flames. ‘I think we’ve seen the end of the Daleks forever.’

Victoria blinked back her tears. She felt a terrible pang in her head, but this was not the time for mourning. There would be time for that later. ‘We’d better get out of here,’

she said, fighting to keep her voice steady.

‘Yes,’ agreed the Doctor. ‘Lead on, Jamie. Watch your footing. We’ll follow.’

Epilogue

The Doctor stood on the rocks, staring down at the city below. As he watched, another explosion rocked the blazing wreckage and another tower slowly collapsed, feeding the roaring blaze. Craters in the ground marked the sites of vast explosions that had torn apart the edifices.

Virtually nothing was still standing now.

Jamie stood beside him, watching the destruction.

Victoria was a little way ahead of them, wanting a few moments by herself. Jamie gestured towards her. ‘We can’t leave her alone, Doctor.’

‘We’re not going to leave her,’ the Doctor replied. He remembered his promise to Waterfield. ‘She’s coming with us.’ He did not miss the smile of pleasure on Jamie’s face, and suspected there might be an identical one on his own.

Victoria had touched a soft spot in his heart he had almost forgotten about. She was like his granddaughter; needing his advice, his protection and his wisdom. He rather thought she would be good for Jamie, too.

Another pillar of flame fountained up to the sky from the ruins of the city below. ‘The end,’ the Doctor murmured. ‘The final end.’ He gestured to Jamie to start down towards the waiting TARDIS below. It was time to leave this ill-starred world.

As he clambered down the slope, his eyes kept returning to the blazing wreckage of the once-impregnable Dalek city. Had he indeed seen the last of his most implacable foes? He sincerely hoped so. There were few races so evil that their passing could not be mourned by some. In the case of the Daleks, however, there would be none to shed a tear.

If they were all dead. The Emperor had ordered all of the Daleks back to Skaro. Had every Dalek been able to return, or were there still some in transit? Perhaps on other worlds, or in other times? Only time itself would tell.

One thing was absolutely certain, though: the Emperor was dead. The single mind whose terrible urges and will had driven the Dalek race had definitely perished in the flames below. Fire was purifying this world of the Daleks.

Even if some did survive elsewhere, they would be without a leader; at least for the immediate future. There could never be another Dalek as powerful or evil as the Emperor had been. Whatever happened, it was dead.

Did any of the humanized Daleks survive? It was impossible to tell from this distance if any living creature had escaped the holocaust below. Perhaps some endured. If so, what would become of them? Was it possible that out of the ashes of evil, some greater good might evolve? The Daleks had been a terrifying weapon of destruction in the past. If that energy was applied to good, who knew what was possible?

The Doctor shrugged. It was pointless to speculate. He would simply have to wait and find out.

All would be revealed in time.

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